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The Ever And His Friends

by Louis Albert Banks





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The Sinner and His Friends

A VOLUME OF
EVANGELISTIC SERMONS

BY

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"Christ and His Friends," "Paul and His Friends," "John
and His Friends," "David and His Friends," "The
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THE SINNER AND HIS FRIENDS

MAN'S GROWING PERSONALITY AMID THE PASSING FASHIONS OF THE WORLD

"The fashion of this world passeth away."—*I Corinthians* vii. 31.

FASHION is ever a powerful, but transitory, queen. It was a custom in ancient Rome, when that city of the seven hills was the center of the earth, that when the emperor went by in all his imperial pomp an officer was appointed to burn flax before him, crying aloud: "Thus passeth away the glory of the world!" which was done to call the emperor's attention to the fact that all his honor and grandeur would soon vanish and pass away, like the smoke from the burning flax—a custom still observed in Rome at the installation of a new pope.

Fashion has ever been a great power in

this world. It appeals to the eye and the imagination, and even in the matter of dress it has exercised a remarkable influence on the history of mankind. We must not imagine that the great power of fashion is confined to the story of modern civilization. You may turn back to the Old Testament, centuries before the coming of Christ, and find described by the prophets fashion plates not so much out of the way for modern times. Take this quotation from Isaiah: "Moreover the Lord saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks, and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: in that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments and their round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the bonnets and the head-bands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings, and nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils." You see, fashion had a good deal to do with the world then. So much so that the prophet of God took it

into serious account. Its folly was in part the cause for serious judgments which came upon a great people.

The havoc wrought by fashions even in this matter of adornment has made many a page of tragedy. In the fifteenth century the historian tells us the head-dresses of women in Flanders rose to a height so enormous that those of a late day were but dwarfs in comparison. One writer declares that so high and broad were these hair ornaments, with their huge artificial ears, that women could not go through any ordinary door. Thomas Conecte, a Carmelite friar, preached with great earnestness against these absurdities, and so angered the society people of his time that he was burned to death in Rome in the year 1434 on account of his attack on the follies of fashion.

These remarks only suggest the power of fashion in other and more important things. And yet, powerful as it is, it is transitory, and is constantly passing away. Whether it be fashion in clothing, in habits of living, in opinions of men as to government and life, it is ever changing. Open history anywhere and you will be astonished at the principles

which were of the highest authority one, two, or three hundred years ago that are now entirely disbelieved, and many of the philosophies of a few generations past are forgotten and unheard-of to-day. So fashion in all things runs its course and expires, being succeeded by still another fashion in living and thinking and acting, which is recommended by its novelty, and for the time makes slaves of men and women.

It is easy to give our subject a broader scope and apply it to the world as a whole. There, too, it is true to say that "the fashion of this world passeth away." Think of the changes on the map of the globe since men and women of middle age were children. Germany, from a great multitude of quarreling states, has been formed into one great empire. Italy, from being a land of many governments and many kings, is now one kingdom. Africa, with just a little colony here and there along the coast, and with three-fourths of the map marked "unexplored," "desert," or "fever," is now explored from the Mountains of the Moon to the mouth of the Nile; every square mile of it staked off and owned, and dotted with mis-

sion stations from one ocean to the other. Alaska, an unknown land of ice and glacier, has become one of the richest gold mines of the world and is rapidly building towns and cities. Spain has been banished from American waters, and Cuba has grown to be a free republic, while the United States of America has spread out across the seas and raised the Stars and Stripes in hailing distance of Asia. Heathen Japan has been born into a new nation with free schools and constitutional government. Old China has been honeycombed with commercial and missionary agencies from every live Christian land until all eyes are watching more or less anxiously for the explosion of these dynamic influences. I might speak of many other changes of this sort, but the middle-aged men and women now living have seen all these changes since they were boys and girls. The world of 1850 and 1855 looked very little like the world that you and I are living in to-day. Surely it is true that "the fashion of this world passeth away."

And if we turn from this wide view, and each one think of his own little world, how the outlook has changed as the years have

gone on. Think of the house where you were born; think of the family group you knew when you were a child; think of that little world of grandfather, and grandmother, and father, and mother, and the background of relatives and neighbors, that made the world of your childhood and youth. Where are they now? How widely they have scattered. How many of them have dropt out of the race in the course of the years. A new world has grown up about you, new associations, new friends. Surely in this smaller world also fashion is constantly passing away.

If we narrow our view still more, and confine it to our own selves, the truth of our text is as sure as ever, for concerning our own lives we may say, "The fashion of this world passeth away." All the Scripture references to human life describe it as a transitory state. The psalmist says, "We spend our years as a tale that is told." Again it is compared to a swift ship, and again to a mail-carrier who rides rapidly on his route. It is sometimes likened to a cloud which appears for a little time and then vanishes away. It is never compared to anything permanent, and this agrees with all our observations and experi-

ence. The fashion of the child passes into the fashion of youth; youth into middle age; middle age soon knows the grey hairs that prophesy the loss of strength and the coming of old age, and old age totters toward the sunset of human life. Rapidly the fashion of the world passeth away in our human lives. Shakespeare makes Macbeth say:

“Out, out, brief candle!

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more.”

But perhaps no one has pictured with truer hand the changing fashion of the world in the passing of human life than our own Longfellow in his poem, “The Old Clock on the Stairs,” in which he tells us that

“Through days of sorrow and of mirth,
Through days of death and days of birth,
Through every swift vicissitude
Of changeful time, unchanged it has stood,
And as if, like God, it all things saw,
It calmly repeats those words of awe,—

‘Forever—never!
Never—Forever!’

"In that mansion used to be
Free-hearted Hospitality;
His great fires up the chimney roared;
The stranger feasted at his board;
But, like skeleton at the feast,
That warning timepiece never ceased,—
 'Forever—never!
 Never—Forever!'"

"There groups of merry children played,
There youths and maidens dreaming strayed;
O precious hours! O golden prime,
And affluence of love and time!
Even as a miser counts his gold,
Those hours the ancient timepiece told,—
 'Forever—never!
 Never—Forever!'"

"From that chamber, clothed in white,
The bride came forth on her wedding-night;
There, in that silent room below,
The dead lay in his shroud of snow;
And in the hush that followed the prayer,
Was heard the old clock on the stair,—
 'Forever—never!
 Never—Forever!'"

"All are scattered now and fled,
Some are married, some are dead;
And when I ask, with throbs of pain,
'Ah! when shall they all meet again?'"

As in the days long since gone by,
The ancient timepiece makes reply,—

‘Forever—never!

Never—Forever!’

“Never here, forever there,
Where all parting, pain, and care,
And death, and time shall disappear,—
Forever there, but never here!

The horologe of Eternity

Sayeth this incessantly,—

‘Forever—never!

Never—Forever!’ ”

Our poet leads us to a far more comforting reflection—that while nothing is truer than that the fashion of this world is passing away, man's personality need not pass away with it, but may grow in the midst of all the changing fashions, using them without being a slave to them. As a growing boy changes from the kilts of his infancy into his knee-breeches, and then counts it a day of promotion when he reaches the long trousers, and so on through all the changing fashions of his apparel, and under all these garbs is growing out of childhood into youth, and out of youth into manhood, ever a stronger and larger personality, so in a larger way it is our privi-

lege and our duty, amid all the changing fashions of the world, to be growing in mind and heart and soul until we shall put off the fashion of old age for immortality and eternal life.

We may do this, because, while the fashions of the world change, there are some things with which we have to do that abide. It will comfort us to think of them for a moment.

First, God abides. He does not change. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. The God of Abraham, who visited him in desert places, and who communed with him until amid the shifting sands of the desert he beheld a city whose builder and maker is God, is our God. The God of David, who nerved his arm to fight the lion and the bear, who gave him courage in the face of Goliath, who comforted his heart in the mountain caverns, who gave him psalms to sing when he was an exile in the wilderness; who, when he sinned, sent his messenger to rebuke him and warn him, and when he repented and confest his sins forgave him with infinite tenderness, is our God. The God of Elijah, who sent ravens to feed him by the brook Cherith, who sent an angel to minister to him when he was faint

with discouragement, who answered his prayer and gave him triumph on Mount Carmel, and who at the last sent down his chariots of fire, to carry him home to heaven, is our God. The God of Paul, who revealed himself to Paul on the way to Damascus and saved him with a mighty salvation, who answered his prayer in the jail at Philippi when Paul and Silas sang songs at midnight, who helped him to turn Ephesus upside down, who saved him from the sea in the winter storm, who gave him grace in the Roman prison and made him victorious and joyful as he waited for the executioner's block, is our God. God abides. Everything that he was to Abraham, or David, or Elijah, or Paul he will be to us. God is not sleeping or dead. He is alive, and his heart toward us is the heart of a father, and tho it be dark about us we may put our hands up into the shadows over our head and know that God will take us by the hand and lead us safely.

Second, Genuine goodness does not change. To be honest and good, simply that, is as splendid a thing now as it ever was in the history of the world, and that we may keep. That may abide. Fortune may take wings

and fly away. We may change from health to the weakness of the invalid. We may lose the applause of men and become unpopular. We may lose the strength of youth and become old and frail. But amid all the passing changes and fashions of the world we may cling to a good character, genuine sincerity of heart and purpose that may abide with us forever.

Third, The opportunity for service to God and man does not change. We may serve God wherever we are. We may serve him with grateful and loving thoughts toward him and we may serve him through help and good cheer which we give our fellow men. This opportunity for service is never taken from us. No matter how poor we are, nor how weak; no matter how much we have to be helped ourselves; by cheerfulness, by loving sympathy, and by kindly appreciation, we can serve others about us and make our lives a benediction to someone else. This will abide as long as life lasts, and if we daily use this privilege it is impossible that life shall not have much of happiness for us. No man or woman need ever despair of finding happiness while able by word or deed or smile to

give happiness to someone else. The opportunity for service abides.

Fourth, Immortality and heaven remain. The mortal life is constantly changing, but the eternal life abides. Shakespeare makes one of his characters speak about the escape "from this earth's thralldom to the joys of heaven." And to many it has been like that. The martyrs, and all those who have suffered and borne heavy burdens for the Lord's cause, have found a sense of escape in putting off the slavery of the earth for the freedom of the skies. Thank God, we may know already in this life the pulsation of immortality. If we love Christ, if we pillow our heads upon the Father's bosom, if we rest our faith in God, there shall be no break between this life and the other; we shall fall asleep here and awake there.

JESUS AS OUR INSPIRATION AND EXAMPLE

“Who went about doing good.”—*Acts* x. 38.

HUMANITY is always prone, like the pendulum of a clock, to swing from one extreme to another, and it has been so in men's estimate of Jesus Christ. There have been those who have been so absorbed in the vision of Jesus as a sacrifice for the sins of the world that they have not given sufficient attention to the human life of Jesus which he lived among men. On the other hand, there have been those who have been so fascinated with the beautiful life which was lived by Jesus of Nazareth, and who have been so drawn out after him as an example for our human living, that they have lost sight of the supreme end of that life given in atonement on the cross for our sins. Our view of Jesus ought to be broad enough to include both these ideas. Our hope of salvation rests in the fact that “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth

in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." But resting in that with reverent and grateful faith, it is not only our blessed privilege, but our solemn duty as well, to study the humanity of Jesus, to make ourselves intimately familiar with the life of Jesus, that we may gain from it the inspiration to live in a similar spirit of grateful love toward God and of sympathetic helpfulness toward our fellow men.

The words of our text were uttered by Peter in his sermon before Cornelius and his household. On the human side they form a marvelous epitome of the life of Jesus. He is described as a man "who went about doing good." I am sure that it can not fail to be profitable to us to seriously consider some of the characteristics of Christ's method of doing good as a stimulus to our own Christian living.

We can not fail to be imprest with those two words: "*went about.*" They suggest to us the positive character of the life of Jesus. Christ was no hermit saint. He was not simply good, depending on people to come and find out his goodness for themselves. Jesus Christ was goodness in action. He was

goodness reinforced with a man's arms, a man's feet, a man's hands, a man's eyes, a man's speech. He went about doing good. He sought for opportunities to do good. From his childhood Jesus had studied the Old Testament Scriptures, had communed with God, had been built up in holiness of life, and when he went forth to his public ministry he sought for opportunities to bring into action all that he was in character, and all that he possessed in strength, and knowledge, and spiritual influence, that he might be helpful to every needy body and soul he could find.

All these facts about Jesus, which reveal to us his constant journeying, his helpfulness to the sick and the poor and the sinful, ought to impress on our hearts that it is not enough for us to live a life which is only negatively good. We can not fall back on our record and say, "I do not do any harm. I do not injure any one. I am careful never to slander anybody. I would not wrong any one for the world. There is no man, or woman, or child, who can say that I ever harmed them." I have heard people talk like that, with a tone and an air of pride, as tho they thought that were a great thing to say. It is a good thing

to be able to say that, but it is not enough. A man might say all that and not be a Christian. Christianity is more than that. Christianity does not consist in simply not doing harm. Christianity is goodness in action; goodness set to work building almshouses, erecting hospitals, supporting children's homes, searching out the needs of the destitute, seeking after the lost, hunting for opportunities to bring back the lost sheep that is in danger of the ravening wolves. Christianity is not simply being good; it is scattering goodness to the ends of the earth, and causing it to blossom again in dark places.

When Cook, the great navigator, made his circumnavigation of the globe, he took with him a vast quantity of the seeds of English flowers. He had these made up into little packets, and wherever the vessel landed, the boatmen noticed Cook with a number of these little packets, searching out places that gave promise of fertility and scattering these seeds, gathered in the far-off English gardens. In that way he belted the whole world with English flowers. The sun and the rain and all the marvelous chemistry of nature

took care of those scattered seeds, and many of them lived and reproduced themselves, so that years afterward later navigators were surprised to find English flowers growing where they never could have dreamed of seeing them. It was in such a manner that Jesus Christ went about doing good. He carried the seeds of heavenly flowers with him in his speech, in the spirit of his life, in everything he said or did, and they took root and grew up in strange places, but always breathing the same divine fragrance and beauty.

Let us not fail to get this phase of our lesson well learned. You can not even keep the goodness you have without using it. It is the garment that is not used that is preyed upon by the moths, and it is the idle Christian the fiber of whose moral character is in danger. Some unknown poet has set in striking lines this great truth:

“I had a beautiful garment
And I laid it by with care;
I folded it close with lavender leaves
In a napkin fine and fair;
‘It is far too costly a robe,’ I said,
‘For one like me to wear.’

“So never at morn or evening
I put my garment on;
It lay by itself, under clasp and key
In the perfumed dusk alone,
Its wonderful broidery hidden
Till many a day had flown.

“There were guests who came to my portal,
There were friends who sat with me,
And clad in soberest raiment
I bore them company;
I knew I owned a beautiful robe,
Tho its splendors none might see.

“There were poor who stood at my portal,
There were orphaned sought my care;
I gave them the tenderest pity,
But had nothing besides to spare;
I had only the beautiful garment,
And the raiment for daily wear.

“At last on a feast-day’s coming,
I thought in my dress to shine;
I would please myself with the luster
Of its shifting colors fine;
I would walk with pride in the marvel
Of its rarely rich design.

“So out from the dust I bore it—
The lavender fell away—
And fold on fold I held it up
To the searching light of day.
Alas! the glory had perished
While there in its place it lay.

“Who seeks for fadeless beauty
Must seek for the use that seals
To the grace of a constant blessing
The beauty that use reveals;
For into the folded robe alone
The moth with its blighting steals.”

Again, we shall be helped to more influential Christian living by studying the life of Jesus as revealing to us *an expert in the art of kindness*. Christ was the kindest of men. He was infinitely forbearing. He was never too busy to be kind. It was always easier to get to see Jesus and to receive gentle attentions from him than it was even from his disciples. You remember the occasion when a number of mothers had been drawn to Christ by his wonderful sermons, and with a mother's love for their children had desired Christ's blessing on the heads of their little ones. The disciples were offended at it; they thought it was troubling Christ unnecessarily. But Jesus turned to the mothers who were going away disappointed, and we are sure it was with a smile of infinite kindness that he said to them, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” And

then he took the children in his arms, one after another, and put his gentle hands upon their heads, and gave them his benediction. How infinitely kind it was! How it must have warmed the hearts of those mothers.

Jesus was never too tired to be kind, not only in an ordinary way, but in the highest and truest sense. The woman who came to him at the well of Sychar found him very tired, but all that was thrown aside in the kindness that sought with infinite tact and gentleness to win her from her sins.

Christ was kind to bad people. There is nothing in all history so completely kind as Christ's conduct toward the sinful woman who was brought to him by the men who were ready to stone her to death. Recall the scene again. The angry self-righteous crowd, mad for the woman's blood. They ask Jesus what they shall do—if they shall obey the law of Moses and stone her to death? Jesus bends over, and begins to write with his finger on the sand, and as he does so he says, "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone." One by one, in shame, they slip away until she stands there alone. Christ lifts his kind, pitying face, and inquires, "Do none accuse

thee?" And the woman answers that there are none left. And then with tenderness and pathos that must have gone clean down to the fountain of the woman's heart, the Master said, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more." And so everywhere Christ never gave help or showed mercy except in kindness that was like a benediction.

Here is a great lesson for us. We must do good in a kind way if our good is to be in the highest degree effective. It is possible to give help, physical, intellectual and moral, and yet do it in such a spirit and in such a manner that it leaves a sting behind it and robs the deed of much of its power to bless. Every Christian must take lessons in kindness of Jesus Christ—kindness in doing good.

Christ was *a model friend*. When Christ had once chosen his friends he stood by them loyally. He bore with their failings. The men whom he chose for friends had many failings. Some of them were stubborn by temperament; they were slow to understand his meanings; they had to be taught over and over again, but Jesus never gave them up on that account. Some of them tried him in the tenderest spot any great man can know.

Peter had been one of the closest of his friends. Jesus had admitted him into the little, inner, confidential band; and yet Peter had a panic at the last, and bitterly denied, in the presence of the enemies of Jesus, that he had ever known him. But Jesus did not cast him off because of that. He did not turn on him, and utter words of condemnation. No; he turned his eyes on Peter, and let Peter see to the depths the loyal friendship there was there for him, and with a sharp cry of anguish Peter ran out into the darkness to weep over his meanness and ingratitude to his divine Friend. And after his resurrection, with the first message that Jesus sent to his disciples, he sent a loving word to Peter, and afterward sought him out, that he might know that the Master still held him in loving bonds of friendship. Judas was not true to Jesus, but Christ would not throw him away on that account. He still loved him and poured out his love upon him to win him back to goodness, and we have no record of one unkind word that Jesus spoke to Judas. When Judas betrayed him with that hypocritical kiss, it was only in an exclamation of loving sorrow that Jesus said, "Judas, be-

trayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" The story of Christ's friendship not only with the disciples, but with Mary and Martha and Lazarus and numerous others, is one of the most beautiful stories in the world, and reveals to us the perfect Friend who, having "loved his own, loved them unto the end." And at the last, when he hung upon the cross, was there ever a more beautiful picture of friendship than when, casting his eyes on John, he exclaimed, "Behold thy mother." Then looking toward his mother, he said, "Behold thy son!" Such good friends were Jesus and John, it was not necessary that any other words should be uttered. John tells us in his Gospel that he took Mary, the mother of Jesus, home to his house, and from that day she was as his own mother. O Christians, let us study the life of Jesus that we may become capable of being true friends. The noblest society can not exist without perfect friendship, and only in Jesus Christ can we find the inspiration and the example that will help us to illustrate such friendship in our own lives.

We must not fail to mark *the forgiving spirit in which Jesus went about doing good.*

No man will ever do good without awakening opposition. The life of Jesus convinces us that if a man were to come here to-day and open the eyes of the blind and unstop the ears of the deaf and lift up the sinful into goodness and live a life as spotlessly pure as Jesus, he would awaken opposition. Men whose business was hurt by his life, or whose sins were condemned by his goodness, would lie about him and slander him and seek to do him harm. No matter how good anyone lives, if it is positive goodness it will arouse opposition. It was so with Jesus Christ. Men have never said meaner things about anyone than they said about Jesus. But they failed utterly to awaken any answering hatred or anger in the heart of Jesus. He had the power to get revenge on them, but he never used it on a single occasion. His heart was full of forgiveness, and he taught and practised that we should forgive our enemies, that we should do good to those who spitefully use us, and that we should pray for those who are seeking to do us harm. Here is a lesson that Christians to-day need to ponder. Many are kept back from joyous Christian experience because there is hatred in their hearts.

I have no doubt I speak to someone now whose heart is like a bitter fountain because someone has wronged you—or you at least fancy they have, and that is just as bad in its effect on you—and you have not had this grace of forgiveness; you have cherished the matter in your heart, and you feel that if you ever have a chance to get vengeance on them for their meanness it will give you pleasure to do it. Dear friend, you need to sit at the feet of Jesus Christ and learn how to forgive. Only by acquiring the grace of forgiveness can your heart be so sweetened that no wrong that can come to you from the outside can discolor or corrupt its sweet waters.

We must not omit a brief word concerning *the sympathy and compassion for the misfortunes and the sufferings of others* which was one of the supreme characteristics of that life of Jesus which went about doing good. Jesus had the marvelous ability to see at a glance the sorrow of another. It broke his heart to see a widow following her only son to the grave. His compassion compelled him to stop the funeral procession and bring the young man back to life. And when Jesus stood above Jerusalem and looked down upon the great

city that had rejected him, and saw with prophetic eye the sorrows that would come upon its people, with tears running down his cheeks he exclaimed: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! If thou hadst known at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes!" And Jesus had as much compassion over an individual man, or woman, or child, who was blind, or leprous, or crippled, or starving, or sinful, as he had over a perishing city. His heart was tender toward the needs of others. Dear friends, we must study at the feet of Jesus Christ. We must come close into his own personal friendship until our hearts shall throb with this same divine compassion, and we become sensitive as was our Lord to the needs of the people whom we meet. Then each of us will come to be known, as was the Master whose name we have taken, as one "who went about doing good."

THE KEY-NOTE OF CHRIST'S GOSPEL

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."—*Gal.* i. 3, 4.

THE key-note of the Gospel is that God is a father; that he is always interested in us and forever desiring our salvation. The Bible does not teach that there was one single emotional epoch only, under the influence of which God permitted Christ to come from heaven to atone for our sins, but that the very heart of God is love, and that always he is willing to give his best for us. One of the greatest of the English preachers, Dr. Robertson Nicoll, the editor of the *British Weekly*, has a most unique sermon on that wonderful text we quote so often: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He divides this text, as does another great preacher of the olden time, into this suggestive arrangement: First, there is the lake; the love

of God. "God so loved the world," that is the reservoir, the lake, the source of all the blessings of salvation. Then there is the river, "He gave his only begotten son." God so loved us that he gave Christ for our salvation. Then there is the pitcher, "Whosoever believeth on him." That is the pitcher that brings the draught to our lips. Lady Henry Somerset, groping blindly after salvation, seemed to hear a heavenly voice speaking to her, "Act as if I were and thou shalt know that I am!" She obeyed and soon Christ revealed himself to her. Then there is the draught, "Should not perish, but have everlasting life." Now the lake, the river, the pitcher, the soul-saving draught of salvation all depend upon the love which is in the heart of God. It is only when I think of God as a father that I seem to get any real glimpse of the tenderness and patient persistence of the Divine love.

I once knew a father whose first-born son had become prodigal and had gone away from home. He had been gone a long time, and the father did not know where he was or whether he should ever see him again. But his heart was always anxious and he was for-

ever seeking him. He was a busy man, with many cares, but he said he never had a telegram brought to him, or heard the bell ring late at night, but his heart was in his throat with awakened hope that it might be some word from the wanderer whom in spite of all his sins he loved so devotedly. And if a frail, faulty, human father (for this man was not specially a good or great man) can feel like that, what shall we say of the Heavenly Father, whose heart is infinite love, in whom there is no shadow of prejudice or selfishness, but who is forever seeking the good of his children?

1. The great declaration of our text is that Christ gave himself for our sins. It ought to make sin seem awful to us. It should be impossible for us to read of the sufferings of Christ in our behalf without deep anguish and sorrow. Dr. J. H. Norton tells the story of one of his friends who in the old slavery days was accustomed to visit a venerable colored man in his little cabin, to read the Bible to him, and to converse with him about spiritual things. Upon such occasions he would sometimes request the old man to say what part of the Bible he should read; but

this he would never willingly do. "Any part, Massa, for it is all good." His reason for this unwillingness he never gave, but the gentleman who visited him imagined that he thought it irreverent to give a preference to any portion of the message, the whole of which was sent from God. After coaxing him in vain, sometimes the master would say, "Well, if you can't tell me what you would like to hear I may as well go back to the house." Then would come the ready answer, and it was always the same: "If it pleases you, sir, I'd rather hear about the sufferings of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." From the moment the reading began the old man's whole being and consciousness seemed to be absorbed by the story; and tho no articulate word escaped him, the groans and sighs that accompanied the reading throughout, giving emphasis and expression to the words as they fell from the reader's lips, bespoke unutterable fellowship of the sufferings of Jesus. And the white man, a man of unusually large powers and experience, declared that never in his life had he begun to enter into the unfathomable depths of the amazing tragedy of the cross as he did then. Never before or

since has he heard anything from the pulpit that approached it in force and clearness of exposition. Such was the effect both upon the reader and the hearer that he was compelled to pause at intervals to recover a sufficient degree of composure to admit of his proceeding. The Holy Ghost was the preacher, revealing the truth to their hearts. How our own hearts would melt in humility and gratitude if we could apprehend in its fullness the statement of our text that Christ gave himself for our sins!

2. We have here the splendid statement that Christ is willing and able to deliver us from our sins and from the contamination of the evil in the world where we live. He is the only deliverer. He alone can cleanse the heart from the stains of sins.

Some years ago a statue which had been erected in India to the memory of Queen Victoria was found to be shamefully defaced with a coat of coal tar. The authorities used every endeavor to discover the perpetrator of the indignity, but without success. An attempt was then made to cleanse the figure of the great queen; but all efforts were found to be unavailing. At last, after many Europeans

had sought in vain to remove the ugly stains, a Hindu offered his services, and promised, with the aid of a special fluid he possessed, to renew the beauty of the statue. He was allowed to experiment on the figure, with the result that the coal tar was entirely removed and the monument restored to its former condition. As there was but one man who could remove the stain from that statue, so there is but One, the Lord Jesus Christ, who can take away the stain of sin from our hearts. But he is able to deliver us from the bondage of evil habits and to purify us from all the defilements that sin has cast upon us.

Christ is the sinner's only chance of salvation. If we lose that chance there is no hope of deliverance. I remember the story told by a sailor who was on the steamer *Forest Castle* coming from Liverpool to America. They were off the coast of Newfoundland when an owl as white as snow fell exhausted on the deck. The owl had made a desperate flight from an iceberg to the ship. When the iceberg parted company with the ice-field in the far north, it evidently carried with it the owl, which clung to its raft of crystal until flight was useless, a stretch of open sea form-

ing a barrier over which the bird did not dare attempt to cross. For many days, no doubt, it had been watching for an opportunity of escape, and when the steamship appeared on the horizon the bird lost its fear of man in the presence of its greater fear of death and made its great dash for life. It was half starved, and ill-prepared for such a long chase, but it was its one opportunity, and, seizing that, it won the race. I do not doubt that some of you men and women are in the condition of that bird. You are drifting on an iceberg of selfishness and sin ever farther out from the coast of safety. Some of you have been drifting a long time, and you are out of sight of the safe shores where once your confidence was so strong and true in God. If you drift on there is no doubt about the end. It can only be disaster for this world and for the next. But here and now the ship of Christ's Gospel of mercy and salvation rises on the horizon. With all the earnestness of my soul I raise the Gospel trumpet to my lips, and I call to you the invitations of the Gospel, "Whosoever will may come!" "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." It is the chance of your lifetime. Fly to Christ.

and in him find the forgiveness of your sins and the deliverance of your soul.

3. The key-note of the whole Bible as well as of Christ's Gospel is in our text. The one great purpose of the Bible is to reveal God to man, to show him Christ as his Savior, to redeem him from his sins, to plant the hope of heaven in his heart and lead him thither. Some people fall into many perplexities and doubts about the Bible because they entirely misapprehend its purpose. The Bible tells much history, but it does not pretend to be a book of history. It only tells enough to answer its own purpose. Neither is it a book of philosophy, nor a book of science. It is a book of salvation. It is the book of God to reveal Jesus Christ as a Savior to a sinner, and no man ever yet reverently and humbly took the Bible for what it is and obediently followed it without finding salvation. There could be no greater folly than to refuse to avail yourself of the guidance of God's Word because there are many things about it that you do not understand. Take the light it gives you and follow that, and every day you shall have more light.

Dr. John Robertson, the Scotch evangelist,

tells the story of two friends who were in earnest conversation as the shadows of evening were rapidly falling in a farmhouse in Scotland. One of them was a young Christian student, the other a young farmer whose father had recently died. The farmer had been dipping into some kind of shallow infidel books and had become semiskeptical about his father's old Bible because it did not tell him the things he wanted to know: the origin of evil, the beginning of matter; how, indeed, all the universe was made. The Bible said nothing about the great scientific mysteries which throb and burn around our little life. How could it be God's book if it did not reveal to us those great mysterious heights of being; those towering paths of existence? At last it comes time for the young student to go, and rising he makes his way to the door, accompanied by his friend. It is a dark night, and the moor lies between this farmhouse and the student's home. Danger is on the moor in the dark—rifts and ditches, boulders and deep bogholes. On the hall table there is an old-fashioned farm lantern, which the farmer proceeds to light. He closes the casement with a snap and is about to hand it to his

friend as he says good-night. But the student waves it away and says, "No, Jamie, I must refuse to take that lantern of yours."

"Refuse to take the lantern? What do you mean, John? You are crossing the moor, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am crossing the moor; but why should I take that lantern, Jamie? It can not light up Benachie; it can not reveal the river Don down there in the valley; it can not light up the distant landscape. Why, Jamie, ten yards away from it all the land lies in pitch darkness. Why should I take your puny little lantern?"

"But, John," resumed the farmer, wondering what strange mental turn his friend had taken, "this lantern is not for Benachie, or the river, or the distant hills. It is for your road across the moor. It will light you home."

"Then, indeed, Jamie, if your lantern be for my road across the moor, and if it will light me home, I should be a fool not to take it. Give it to me, for I'll need it this dark night. But, man, listen: The Bible is not for the great peaks of the mysteries of the universe. It is not for the distant fields of creation and existence. I am waiting for the morn-

ing when I'll see them all in the sunshine of resurrection, but, meanwhile, for this road home across the moor of earth, for the path through the darkness of human sin and sorrow, God has given us the sufficient lantern of his Holy Word, Jamie. Don't be so foolish as to reject God's Bible. It will light you home, man; it will light you home."

Jamie pondered long and late that night. And after a while he opened his father's Bible; he took God's lantern; walked in its light; it led him to the Cross, where he found Christ as his deliverer from all his sins.

My friends, I bring to you this key-note of Christ's Gospel and this lantern of God's word, and I can say to you with all assurance that if you will reverently and humbly accept them you will find light to lead you home and find music that shall gladden your heart.

THE CHRIST SEEN IN YOUR LIFE

“When it pleased God, who called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”—*Gal. i.* 15, 16.

It should make us solemn and earnest in our study to notice that it is God who calls us to salvation and to service. Men are always saved for service. No man is saved to selfishness, but to unselfish devotion to the great purpose of blessing others. Everything depends on the attention and obedience we give to the divine call. Moses had his call on the slopes of Horeb, when God spoke to him in the burning bush, and called him to a life of arduous but glorious service. He obeyed the call, and following that divine leading the sheep-herder of the wilderness became the law-giver of all mankind.

Pharaoh, too, had his call from God, a call repeated again and again, but refusing to heed it, he was drowned in the Red Sea, a poor, wrecked, and rebellious soul. Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, had one

come to her in her home one day, saying, "The Master is come and calleth for thee." Mary heeded the call and went forth in humility and penitence and love to sit at the feet of Jesus, and in thus answering the call of God saved her soul and glorified her life. That rich young man, moral and upright, who came to Christ and asked what he should do to inherit eternal life, had his call, just as plain and definite as Mary's, and it came from the lips of Jesus with the eyes of the Lord looking into his; but failing to heed it, he turned away into the darkness with a cloud upon his brow. Zacchæus, the dishonest politician of Jericho, had his call from the Lord, and answering to it promptly, salvation came to his house; but the call was not more blessed in opportunity than that which came to the swine growers of Gadara, who refused the call and banished Jesus from their coasts forever. Paul had his call from God on the way to Damascus, when by a light brighter than the light of the sun he and his party were struck blind and fell to the ground. On hearing the call of Christ Paul's first words were, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Thus yielding himself to the leadership of Christ, he became one of

the greatest men in the history of the world, was a blessing to multiplied thousands while he lived, and has been a blessing to multiplied millions since he vanished from the earth. But the call that came to Paul was not more distinct and certain than that which came to Herod, through John the Baptist, or to King Agrippa through Paul himself. Both heard the call, both were convicted of their sins, both were convinced of their duty, both hardened their hearts and lived and died unforgiven.

With these thoughts in my mind it is with a solemn heart that I come as the messenger of Christ to bring the call of God's grace to you. If you heed it I know that it means forgiveness of sins. It means a peaceful heart, a noble and useful life, and heaven in the future. If you refuse it your life will be only the darker because you heard the call and would not yield.

We are taught in this Scripture that God is ever seeking to reveal Christ in us—first, to ourselves, in our own hearts. That is one of the divine mysteries. On our side the approaches to salvation are plain and simple. I have been going wrong. I repent, which is,

practically, simply turning about and beginning to do right. I take Christ at his word, that "whosoever will may come," and I make up my mind to be his man, to do what will please him. I set myself to that. I begin to obey him and to care above everything else for his approval, and when I do that a wonderful thing happens. A strange rest and satisfaction comes into my heart. A peace which is beyond all other peace wraps me about like a soft garment.

A young man in my study the other day bowed in prayer for the forgiveness of his sins. When we knelt down he was sad and heavy-hearted and tearful, and when we rose up I said, "My dear boy, I can not tell you how happy I am that you have come to this great decision." He began to speak, and looking on his face I beheld it illuminated with great joy as he said, "I am wonderfully happy, too!" And immediately I thought of the words of Jesus when he said to Nicodemus: "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Now some of the best Christians in the world could not possibly tell when and where Christ began to reveal himself in peace and joy and comfort in their hearts, and yet he does so reveal himself. It is not for us to worry or be anxious because our experience in coming into Christian confidence and comfort is different from that of some one else; but it is for us to rejoice that we are there. And if any are going with sad hearts, without the comforting assurance of Christ's love, let me encourage you to believe that it is for you to know this comfort. It is God's desire to reveal Christ in you so that you shall walk the way of life confidently and gladly in fellowship with Christ.

God seeks also to reveal Christ to others through us. When we live the Christ life men see that and glorify God. One of the most striking characteristics in the life of Jesus was his complete and natural submission to the will of God. Whenever he speaks of God in connection with himself he speaks of him as Father. The sweetest and most perfect submission in the world is the submission of a thoroughly loving and obedient child to the will of the parent. Such a child not only obeys,

but finds in obedience his chief gladness and reward.

A little boy had a beautiful canary, which sang to him every day and awakened him every morning with its sweet twitter. The mother of the child was ill—so dangerously ill that the song of the little bird, which to the boy was delicious music, disturbed and distressed her to such an extent that she could scarcely bear to hear it. He put the bird away in the room of the house farthest removed from the sick chamber, but the shrill notes of the bird still reached the sick woman and caused pain to her in her weakened nervous condition. One morning, as the boy stood holding his mother's hand he saw, when the canary sang, that an expression of pain passed over her dear face. She had never yet told him that she could not bear the noise; now she did so, but very gently. "It does not seem like music to me," she said, as he asked her if the notes were not pretty. He looked at her in wonder. "And do you really dislike the sound?" "Indeed I do," she said.

The child, full of love to his mother, left the room. The golden feathers of the pretty songster were glistening in the sunshine, and

he was trilling forth his loveliest notes; but they had ceased to please the boy. They were no longer beautiful or soothing to him, and taking the cage in his hands he left the house. When he returned he told his mother that the bird would disturb her rest no more, for he had given it to his little cousin. "But you loved it so; how could you part with the canary?" "I loved the canary, mother," he replied, "but I love you more. I could not really love anything that would give you pain. It would not be true love if I did." That little story represents perfectly what our attitude should be to God. Jesus says, speaking of the Father, "I do always those things that please him." And if we have Christ revealed in us we shall show the same sensitiveness of love against doing anything that will be displeasing to God. Such a life shows God to men and has power to charm men to Christ.

Perhaps as Christians we do not feel with sufficient keenness that it is our blest privilege to bring God within eye-shot and ear-shot of men. "No man hath seen God at any time," but when Christ dwells in our hearts, and we live in his spirit in the common affairs of our every day experience, God is seen.

S. D. Gordon tells the story of a minister who lived in a New England town. He had a son, nearly fourteen years of age, who was going to school. One afternoon the boy's teacher called at the parsonage, asked for the father, and inquired:

"Is your boy sick?"

"No; why?"

"He was not at school to-day."

"Is that so?"

"Nor the day before."

"Well!"

"I supposed he was sick."

"No, he is not sick."

"Well, I thought I should tell you."

The father said "Thank you," and the teacher left.

The father sat thinking. By and by he heard a click at the gate, and he knew the boy was coming; so he went to open the door. And the boy, when he looked up, saw that his father knew about those three days.

The father said, "Come into the library, Phil."

Phil went, and the door was closed.

The father said, "Phil, your teacher was here this afternoon. He tells me you were

not at school to-day, nor yesterday, nor the day before. And I supposed you were. You let us think you were. And you do not know how badly I feel. I have always trusted you. I have always said, 'I can trust my boy Phil.' And here you have been a living lie for three whole days, and I can't tell you how badly I feel."

Well, that was hard on Phil, to be talked to quietly like that. If his father had asked him out into the wood-shed for a confidential interview, or had spoken roughly, it would not have been nearly as hard.

Then the father said, "Phil, we'll get down and pray."

It was getting harder for Phil all the time. He did not want to pray just then. But the father prayed, and the boy knew as he listened how badly his father felt over his conduct. When they got up the father's eyes were wet—and Phil's eyes were not dry.

Then the father said, "Phil, there's a law of life that where there is sin there is suffering. You can not detach these two things. Now you have done wrong. And I am in this home as God is in the world. So we will do this. You go up to the attic. I'll make a

pallet for you there. We'll take your meals up to you at the regular times. And you stay up there as long as you have been a living lie, three days and three nights."

Phil did not say anything. They went upstairs, the pallet was made, and the father left the boy.

All that evening it was like a funeral around the house. Neither father nor mother could eat at supper-time, nor read or work afterward. They sat up very late before they could get courage to go to bed, and then neither could sleep. Each one made a pretense to be asleep, and each knew the other was not asleep.

At last the wife said, "Why don't you sleep?"

"Well, I just can't for thinking of the boy."

So it went on until two o'clock in the morning. Then the father said, "Mother, I can't stand this any longer; I am going up-stairs with Phil." And he took his pillow and went softly out of the room and up to the attic stairs, and prest the latch very softly so as not to waken the boy if he were asleep, and tiptoed across the attic floor to the corner by

the window, and there Phil lay, wide-awake, with something glistening in his eyes and what looked like stains on his cheeks. And the father got down between the sheets with the boy, and their tears got mixt upon each other's cheeks, and then they slept.

The next night when sleeping time came the father said, "Good night, mother. I am going up-stairs with Phil." And the second night he slept in the attic with his boy.

The third night again he said, "Good night, mother, I am going up with the boy again." And the third night he slept in the place of punishment with his boy.

We do not wonder that such a father healed the boy of his sin, and that the boy has grown to be a great and good man, who is preaching the Gospel with burning heart and flaming lips in China. How could he help it? The boy saw God in his father. He saw how God, longing to save a sinning world, came down to earth in the person of his Son, and lay down alongside of man, and bore his burdens on the cross and in the grave to atone for him and save him. If we would win men to Christ we must be careful that they see Christ in us.

A word about the suggestion of prompt

obedience which Paul gives us in our text. He says that when the call of God came to him he acted at once—"Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." How many have heard the call of God who would have been saved had they only acted promptly according to their convictions. But they waited to deliberate, and to do that is always to give the advantage to the enemy of our souls. The conviction of sin which has been awakened in a heart, silenced by delay, may never again be felt so keenly. Dear friends, I bring you God's call. It is the call of his grace. He seeks to reveal Jesus in you. How can you object to that? The life of Christ is the most beautiful and the most splendid in the world, and your Heavenly Father seeks to make your life like that. If you will respond at once your salvation is sure, and this love-life shall begin in your heart without delay. Obey now!

THE PILLARS OF THE CHURCH

“James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars.”
—*Gal.* ii. 9.

THIS Scripture is exceedingly interesting because of the fact that it gives us the opinion of a trained expert in Christianity on what he deemed the great elements of Christian character. Since Jesus Christ there has been no man with the right to speak with so much authority concerning what it takes to make a Christian as Paul, and when he says that three men who are so carefully photographed for us in the Bible as James and Peter and John seem to him to be pillars, we have Paul's judgment concerning three great essential characteristics of Christianity.

James stands for genuineness and integrity. He stands for the solid virtues. He was a clear-cut man, four-square in his character. His epistle sounds like a true reformer's proclamation. He it is that says: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God can not be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man

is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." It was James who said, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." It was James who said, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." It is this same heart-searching genuine soul who says to us, "Faith, if it hath not works is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"

This was the type of man James was, and Paul says that that characteristic is one of the very foundations of Christian character. Nothing else counts unless we are genuine and honest and whole-hearted in our purpose to be true men and women. The very bed-rock of any honest Christian character is simple straightforward goodness. Any deception, any sham, any lack of straightforwardness must in the nature of things be an abomination unto God and insure disaster in all attempts at the Christian life.

Peter stands for earnestness, for zeal and enthusiasm. He was a big-hearted, impulsive fellow. That impulsiveness got him into lots of trouble before he was brought under discipline; but it was one of the great sources of his strength and power after he had become truly Christian. Peter was always in earnest. Whatever he did, he did it with zeal at white heat. He never froze his audience. A man could not talk with him five minutes without getting warmer at the heart. It is an undoubted fact that earnestness counts a great deal more in proportion than does ability. Many men of great natural gifts have been comparatively failures in the world because

they were sluggish and lazy and without vital force.

Many other men who, like Peter, were not by any means of the highest mental caliber have become forces of the very first magnitude in the world because they have been dead in earnest. Their enthusiasm and the intensity of their devotion have been to their talents what velocity is to a bullet, driving it straight to the mark with tremendous power. It is of the greatest possible value in Christian life. It is the earnest Christian who is forever attracting attention to Jesus—the man who is not only devoted to Christ, but ever counting it the chief thing of his life and the matter of greatest interest to him and to others, so that it is impossible to come in contact with him without feeling that the great factor in the man's career is that he is a Christian. No Christian is so humble or so limited in ability or opportunity that he can not work miracles of blessing to others if he is sufficiently earnest and enthusiastic about his Lord.

John stood for love. He became known as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." The love-life between Christ and John was very beauti-

ful. You remember it was John to whom Christ, when he was dying on the cross, bequeathed his mother, and writing about it many years afterward, John says that he took her home with him that day, and always afterward she was like his own mother. This Christian love for which John stood is the supreme characteristic of the Christian life and is its greatest power. It is hard for us sometimes to feel that love is stronger than anything else, but it is. No one of us can overestimate the power of a perfectly sincere, loving character. To keep close to God, so that the heavenly love illuminates us, exalts us, gives us a brightness all its own, and to live in that spirit from day to day is to be an infinite blessing to men and women about us.

I have seen somewhere that when a great Scotch bridge was being built, the workmen came to a crucial point where two of the most important iron girders refused, by several inches, to come together for the bolts to be driven through—a process which was absolutely essential to the stability of the whole fabric. Every mechanical method known to bridge builders was tried to no purpose; and finally, in despair, all further efforts were

abandoned for the night. It was summer weather, and the sunshine the following morning was very hot, so much so that the great masses of metal expanded beneath the warm rays, and results were achieved by the silent touch of the sun which had defied the utmost efforts of force. So it is in our every-day lives. By living purely and lovingly, with gentleness and forbearance, qualities which can only come to us in the right measure and spirit as we come close to God in fellowship with Jesus Christ will work miracles of blessing in serving our fellow men.

One of the wonderful things about that marvelous new metal called radium is that the same luminous quality is manifest in the smallest fragment as in the larger lump. This is true of Christian love, which might well be called the spiritual radium. Wherever true Christian love is found, there is a power to be reckoned with that can not be measured by any worldly standard.

A few years ago a young boy, fresh from his mother's teachings and prayers, was suddenly plunged into a large law office in one of the great Eastern cities. At first he was bewildered by his strange surroundings; then,

as he listened to impure and blasphemous remarks in the office, the crimson mantled his cheeks and tears brimmed in his eyes.

“What is the matter with you, youngster?” said a coarse voice. “Do you want to go back to your mother’s apron strings?”

“No,” was the reply, “but we never said such things in my mother’s home as you say here.”

The answer elicited a burst of laughter, but the great lawyer at the head of the office, with a sober face, said solemnly: “Gentlemen, this boy is right; and as long as he stays with us I must request and require that you modify your speech.”

From that moment the whole tone of that office was altered. It was the presence of a little fragment of heavenly love. Something of the power and luminous quality of the eternal God was there.

Spurgeon, speaking of these three whom Paul calls pillars, says that God is building for himself in heaven a palace of living stones, and that he does not go to the quarries of perfection, where he may find the richest and purest marbles, but takes poor sinners, such as Peter and James and John, and

polishes them, throwing away that which is evil and developing that which is good until they shine in immortal glory. Goldsmiths make exquisite forms from precious materials; they fashion the bracelet and the ring from gold. God makes his precious things out of base material. From the black pebbles of the defiled brooks of sin he has taken up stones which he has set in the golden ring of his immutable love, to make them gems to sparkle on his finger forever. We may not be able to understand how God does this, but that he does we see every day in the year.

When Marconi's wonderful inventions in wireless telegraphy had aroused a scientific controversy, some holding that the mysterious communications passed through the air and others thinking that they ran through the earth, Marconi would not commit himself to either theory; he satisfied himself with pointing to his invention and saying, "It works." So it may be all a mystery to you how a man who has been in the grip of sin and passion and evil lusts can suddenly, by beginning to pray and to read the Bible and to attend church—by a simple change of attitude, as it were, in relation to faith in Jesus Christ—be-

come an utterly different man, so that the things he once loved he now hates, and the things he once hated he now loves. But in the face of all the mystery of it, "it works." It worked with Paul. It worked with John Bunyan. It worked with Jerry McAuley. And I could call up witnesses from every side of me here to testify to the divine power in Jesus Christ to forgive sins, to transform the heart, and to set life into a new groove of goodness and love.

CHRIST'S FRIENDSHIP FOR THE POOR

"They would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do."—*Gal.* ii. 10.

PETER, James, and John, who are the "they" referred to here by Paul, had been thoroughly drilled for three years by the Master himself in the treatment of the poor, and their attitude was the attitude of Christ. In this Paul heartily agreed with them, recognizing that kindly consideration of the poor was an essential characteristic of the Christian life. There is in this nothing partizan. Poverty is no virtue, and wealth is no sin. On the other hand wealth is no indication of moral goodness, nor poverty any indication of moral evil. But the essential brotherliness of Christianity, which demands that the strong shall share the burdens of the weak, requires that we should emphasize very frequently to ourselves the duty and privilege of remembering in the most earnest and loving way the poor who surround us. And it does

not answer or turn aside the edge of this statement that many poor people are unworthy, and even aggressively wicked. Old Father Taylor, of the Seaman's Bethel in Boston, used to say that there were three kinds of poor—"the Lord's poor, the devil's poor, and the poor devils." That is, there are poor people who are the saints of God, and there are poor people who are sinful and wickedly self-indulgent, and there are other poor people who not only sin against themselves but who viciously sin against the community and prey upon it. Nevertheless, it is our duty to remember with loving solicitude, seeking to be of help and blessing in the fellowship of Jesus Christ, all three of these classes. Such kindly remembrance often turns the "poor devil" into the saint of God.

Over in New Bedford, Massachusetts, the warden of the city jail was one day leading through the corridors a party of visitors, an old man, several women, and a little girl, when they came to the foot of a stairway where a prisoner was scrubbing the floor. This man was a desperate criminal, serving a life sentence. He had been a leader in many mutinies and outbreaks, and had been punished in vain.

"Jim," said the warden, "carry this little girl up-stairs." The prisoner looked up, scowled, and turned away. The child put up her arms about him, saying, "If you will, I'll kiss you." He hesitated a moment, then lifted her on his shoulders as tenderly as any father could have done, and carried her up. At the top of the stairs she raised her face; he gravely stooped and kissed it, then returned to his task. From that day that vicious criminal was transformed and became a true and kindly-souled man.

If we are to give ourselves with loyal fidelity to the Christian program we must remember the poor in our kindly social attentions. When we want to know what it is to be a Christian, we must always go back to Christ, and this is what he says about it: "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blessed; for they can not recompense thee: For thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Now I do not

understand that this Scripture prohibits our breaking bread with our neighbors who have as much of this world's goods as we, but I think it definitely teaches that it is the Christian's duty to give great care and loving attention to social ministration among those who are very poor and unable to make any return of the same sort, and I believe that a following out of this teaching in its spirit by the families of any Christian church would immediately make that church the religious center of the city and bring upon it the most marvelous benediction of God. It is a great thing to do many things where you never can be paid in this world, where God must be your paymaster. It lifts one out of the muck and ruck of the earth into the sweet, pure air of loving brotherhood where Jesus lived all the while.

Dr. W. H. Aitkin, the English evangelist, tells a most interesting story of a well-to-do bachelor who boarded in a private family in Liverpool. One year as it came near Christmas time this gentleman said to the lady of the house, "I want you to make the very best dinner you possibly can; I am going to give a dinner-party for twenty men."

“Well, Mr. C—,” she said, “you have been a long time in my house, and I never heard you talk of giving a dinner-party yet; but I will see to it that it is a right good dinner, and there shall be no mistake about it.”

“Do your best,” he said; “I am going to invite my friends, and I want everything to be done properly.”

The good woman set to work and got up a very good dinner indeed. Christmas Day came. Toward evening the landlord and landlady were expecting the gentlemen who had been invited by their favorite lodger; they did not know who they were, but felt sure they would be people worthy of the occasion. After a time, there came a knock at the door. The landlord opened the door, and there stood before him a man clothed in rags. He had evidently washed his face and brushed himself up a little for the occasion; but his clothing was ragged and unpresentable.

The man said, “Does Mr. C— live here?”

“Yes,” replied the landlord; “he lodges here, but you can not see him; he is just going to sit down to dinner.”

“But,” said the man, “I was invited to come here to dinner this evening.”

The landlord was horror-stricken, so much so that he could not contain himself.

“What!” he said, “you invited to come here this evening, a man like you?”

He had scarcely got the words out of his mouth before he saw another poor, miserable specimen of humanity limping around the corner; he was another of Mr. C—’s guests. By and by the whole twenty of them were there; and in they came, the most haggard, wobegone people one would be likely to find in the streets. They went into that smart looking dining room, with that grand white cloth, with all the nice silver out in display, and all the good things that had been so carefully prepared. It almost took the landlord’s breath away to see them. But when he saw his lodger, whom he knew to be a noble Christian man, setting to work like the Master of old, who girded himself to serve his disciples, making these men happy and helping them to a pleasant evening without any stiffness or formality, he thought, “After all, he is right. This is the best sort of dinner-party,” and neither he nor his wife begrudged the labor they had bestowed.

How Christ-like would be the work of any

church where each member would thoughtfully remember those poorer than himself and seek by loving personal attention and social ministrations to make their daily lives sweeter and happier and stronger! You could not keep people away from a church like that, and nothing but death or banishment would ever cause such a church to lose a member. The people would flock to it "like doves to the windows," and God and our Savior and the angels would look down from heaven with rejoicing. Why can not our own church be like that? It is the most Christian thing we can do.

We should remember the poor in seeking as far as we are able to relieve their misfortunes and open paths of usefulness and betterment for them. Nine times out of ten when a man or a woman has fallen into severest misfortune which has brought about extreme temporary poverty, the thing that is needed above everything else is the interest and kindness of good warm-hearted friends who will cheer and encourage and seek to open the way for an entrance again upon the ladder of achievement. It is not so much the giving to the poor, tho that is often our duty, but it is the

kindly, loving remembrance of the poor, the thoughtful fellowship which we give them, such as we give to our other friends, that is the most Christian thing and of the greatest value. The noblest Christian charity in the world is that which strengthens the object of our kindness to climb the path alone in self-respect and honor. Dr. W. W. Weeks of Toronto tells these two stories illustrative of this important fact:

Many years ago a poor beggar boy stood on London Bridge. With an old violin, on which he played wretchedly, he tried to draw a few pennies from the charitably-disposed listeners. A stranger who was passing asked the lad for his fiddle, and after doing some "tuning," he began to play a low, plaintive melody. A man paused to listen and threw some pennies into the boy's cap. Then another and another stopt, and instead of pennies, sixpences, shillings, crowns, and sovereigns were thrown to the boy. In a few minutes there were thousands of people crowding the bridge, and the boy's hat was filled with coins. Finally the police had to command the musician to stop in order that the bridge might be cleared. It was the great

Paganini who had thus charmed the multitude and filled the pockets of the beggar. But it was only a temporary relief, for in a few months the money would be gone and the beggar as poor as before.

That is one way of helping. One can do it almost without remembering. It is often done by people too cowardly and too selfish and too lazy to inquire or give time and thought toward what seems to be human need. But there is another and better way:

A few years ago a little beggar girl went to the home of Patti, the great prima donna, soliciting help. The queen of song did not give her any money, but asked her if she could sing. As the child sang a couple of Welsh hymns, Patti's trained ear detected something in the girl's voice that gave promise of future power. She arranged with the child to come to her house for lessons every day. For seven years, whenever Patti was at home, she faithfully trained this girl, and then introduced her to the public. To-day she is earning ten thousand dollars a year for herself and blessing multitudes with her songs.

Patti's method was much superior to that

of Paganini's. The Christian treatment of the poor is the golden rule of loving remembrance and thoughtful helpfulness.

Sometimes kindly remembrance of the poor opens the door to salvation. Dr. Theodore Cuyler, on a cold winter evening, made his first call on a rich merchant in New York. As he left his door, and the piercing gale swept in, Doctor Cuyler said, "What an awful night for the poor!" The merchant asked him to wait a moment. He went up-stairs, and came down bringing to him a roll of bank-bills, saying, "Please hand these, for me, to the poorest people you know." After a few days Doctor Cuyler wrote to the merchant the grateful thanks of the poor whom his bounty had relieved, and added: "How is it that a man who is so kind to his fellow creatures has always been so unkind to his Savior as to refuse him his heart?" That sentence touched him to the core. He sent for the minister to come and talk with him and speedily gave himself to Christ.

We may be sure that whenever we remember the poor with loving desire to help them we are brought into close association and fellowship with Jesus. And in this remembrance

we should never forget that the greatest blessing we can bring to any man or woman or child, rich or poor, is the blessing of salvation. Loving thoughtfulness and kindly consideration toward those who work for us or with us will open the door to that sort of sympathetic confidence which will make it easy for us to introduce them to Jesus and bring them the unsearchable riches of salvation. I know of no more beautiful thing than for a man to so live that those whom he has befriended are thereby encouraged to become the friends of Jesus.

THE SECRET OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”—*Gal.* ii. 20.

NOTHING can be more unwise than to invite any one to enter upon the Christian life with the understanding that it is a holiday journey, or with any withholding of the deep seriousness of the undertaking; for while the Christian life is not only the noblest and happiest life that man can lead, as well as the one life that leads to permanent peace and immortal joy, it is also true that it demands of everyone who enters upon it the complete surrender of all his powers to the service of Jesus Christ. If you look up the illustrations connected with the beginnings of the Christian life, you will see that they are deeply earnest and serious. We are told of a man who set about to build a tower without having made the proper preparation. We are told of a king who wisely would not go to war until he was sure that his army was able to de-

feat the enemy. It is a serious thing to build a tower, and still more serious to go to war with a powerful enemy. Christ gave Nicodemus an indication of the seriousness of entering upon the Christian life when he declared that the change from the worldly life of the flesh was as striking and as radical as a new birth, and startled him with the declaration, "Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God."

In our text we have the change that takes place in becoming a Christian illustrated by the crucifixion of Christ, and Paul declares that those who give themselves to Christ must crucify the flesh together with its affections and lusts. Nothing could be more significant as an illustration of the deep seriousness of the beginning of the Christian life than this comparison to the crucifixion. To be crucified always meant death, and not only so, but a long and lingering death. There is no more terrible word to us than the word "crucified," and yet Paul assures us that that is what we must do to every evil desire, to every unholy passion, to every sinful appetite, to every impure affection, if we are to belong to Christ.

I think if we study this thought, many who name the name of Jesus and in more or less degree are seeking to follow him will be deeply convicted of sin, as you recall how many things for which your consciences have rebuked you have received very different treatment than crucifixion at your hands. Not only so, but sin has a very demoralizing effect on us and we are often deceived as to its true character.

Mr. Spurgeon was once talking with a man whose besetting sin was covetousness. He said to him: "How was it that St. Francis de Sales, who was an eminent confessor, to whom persons went in the Romish church to confess their sins, found that persons confest to him in private all sorts of horrible sins, but never had one person who confest the sin of covetousness?" The man replied: "I suppose it is because the sin is so extremely rare."

This covetous man, who was losing his soul through greed, had been so blinded by Satan that he did not see that instead of crucifying the flesh with its greedy lusts he was enthroning it as a god in his soul. And if you will look deep into your own heart it may be you

will find that you have given many a cosy corner, where the cushions are soft, to sins which are banishing Jesus from your heart. There is too little intensity of feeling against sin in our modern religion. The Christian religion is not a milk and water experience. Paul urges that we must cleave to that which is good and abhor that which is evil. Our treatment of sin is not to be a polite philosophical parley, but we are to crucify the fleshly lusts and be dead to them forever.

There is another thought in our text, however, full of infinite hope, and that is that we have a part in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ which we may appropriate to ourselves and thus rise out of the old life of sin and worldliness into the new life of the Spirit, where Christ shall be over all the King. How strong and significant are the words of Paul: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." He would teach us that the crucifixion of Jesus was for each one of us as surely as tho we were the only sinners in the world. He tasted death for every man. Was Paul crucified with Christ? Then each one of us may take up the sentence, and put our own name in it, and say

that when Jesus tasted death upon the cross it was for us individually and personally, and I, if I accept him as my Savior, if through his grace I crucify the old appetites and passions, and like my Lord become dead to them, I may arise as he did from the grave in newness of life and live the life of the Spirit which was the native air he breathed. What hope there is in this wonderful thought! What hope for the sinning soul which has fought his battle in his own strength and failed and is ready to despair! Here is a chance for a new campaign, a new battle, and a new victory, won not through your strength, but through the strength and goodness of your divine Champion, the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ met Satan in the wilderness, on the pinnacle of the temple, in the garden of Gethsemane, on the Cross of Calvary, and in the grave, and came out of all triumphant and victorious, alive forever more. And you have but through faith to appropriate the crucifixion of Jesus Christ to yourself to know the same glorious triumph over your sins, over all your fleshly appetites, and over every temporal or spiritual enemy of your soul.

No man or woman in the world has sinned so deeply or is so completely under the dominion of evil that this message may not be preached to him with all confidence.

Rudyard Kipling, in his "Barrack-room Ballads," has a poem which voices the despairing soul-agony of a man "who has run his own six horses," and who, because "he went the pace and went it blind," had enlisted as a private soldier in a British cavalry regiment. The intensity of the poem may be imagined from the first line, which runs, "To the legions of the lost ones, to the cohorts of the damned." A poor sinner who had been down near to the gates of hell, and was snatched as a brand from the burning, and afterward became an officer of the American Volunteers, wrote out of his own heart's experience a hopeful parody on Kipling's despairing poem. Some lines of it run:

"To the legions of the lost ones, to the cohorts of despair,
To the hopeless myriads sunk in sin and shame,
I, who once was of that number, lift my voice and
boldly dare
Hope and joy for every bond-slave to proclaim.

Yes, I've sinned and drawn the wages; if I lived on
earth for ages
Great horrors to my soul are tightly bound;
In my memory deep are burned deeds I've done and woes
I've learned
In my coffin with my corpse they will be found.

* * * * *

"But I heard a man attesting, and in love and truth
protesting,
That his Savior then and there could save the worst,
If, their sins and vices leaving, they would take his
pow'r believing
That he could—and would—their chains of bondage
burst.

"I could go to depths no lower, and supposing this man
lied,
I should do no harm in testing what he said;
While if half his words were true, from that moment
till I died,
In my life temptation's pow'r would soon be dead.
From sinful past then turning, and the world and Satan
spurning,
With heart sincere I knelt at Jesus' feet;
And he gave me then the witness that his blood gave me
all fitness
For a life in peace and purity complete.

“O all ye sheep who’ve gone astray,
You can be found!
To the Shepherd’s feet now find your way,
You can be found!
You from the bondage of sin can be
Saved from now through eternity
Joyful and happy you all can be—
Glory to God!”

And so I speak this word of hope to any heart conscious of sin and guilt, and beg you to believe that the fight you have lost when struggling alone can be won in the name and strength of Jesus Christ.

One other lesson we ought to find here—that the secret of perpetual vitality and courage in any human life is revealed in this declaration of Paul. Paul never could grow old, because the immortal Christ lived within him, not only mastering and dominating him, but imparting his own immortality.

At the Municipal Lodging House in one of our large cities they have a phrase which has an aching pathos in it. The phrase “spent man” is the classification they employ for the man whose vital spark has sunk so low that there is little hope of its ever being revived. This does not mean that the man will

die. He may live many years, but only as a ship that with no coal and no steam drifts to meet its last storm. It is not in municipal lodging houses only that you meet men and women who have spent their force. Every few days a millionaire blows his brains out, or takes his life in some more or less terrible way, because he has spent his force. And tho a man live fourscore years, and die with his family about him, if he has lived the life of the flesh, and had no hopes except for this world, he comes to the end of his short earthly career "a spent man," and he falls to his grave like a spent bullet falling helplessly to the earth. But go and read the closing words of Paul's career. Hear him tell about winning the race and keeping the faith, and obtaining the crown of life and glory which the Lord has reserved for him, and the idea of "a spent man" will not occur to you. Why this perpetual vitality of Paul? The secret of it all is in this text: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

We must not fail to notice that Paul's faith is the connecting link between him and all this wonderful salvation. My friend, permit nothing to interfere with your faith in Christ as the Son of God and the crucified Savior, who gave himself on the Cross to ransom you from your sins. Better lose anything in this world than that faith; it is life's most precious treasure. The worst enemy in the world, tho you count him friend, is the one who would draw you from that faith which is the very life of your soul. Some poet puts the truth very clearly and in a picture which it is not hard to remember. He says:

"I stood and watched my ships go out,
Each, one by one, unmooring free,
What time the quiet harbor filled
With flood-tide from the sea.

"The first that sailed, her name was Joy,
She spread a smooth, white, shining sail,
And eastward drove with bending spars
Before the sighing gale.

"Another sailed, her name was Hope,
No cargo in her hold she bore;
Thinking to find in western lands
Of merchandise a store.

"The next that sailed, her name was Love,
She showed a red flag at her mast,
A flag as red as blood she showed,
And she sped south right fast.

"The last that sailed, her name was Faith,
Slowly she took her passage forth,
Tacked and lay to; at last she steered
A straight course for the north.

"My gallant ships, they sailed away,
Over the shimmering summer sea;
I stood at watch for many a day—
But one came back to me.

"For Joy was caught by Pirate Pain;
Hope ran upon a hidden reef;
And Love took fire and foundered fast
In whelming seas of grief.

"Faith came at last, storm-beat and torn;
She recompensed me all my loss,
For, as a cargo, safe she brought
A crown linked to a cross."

THE TRAGEDY OF FRUSTRATING THE GRACE OF GOD

“I do not frustrate the grace of God.”—*Gal.* ii. 21.

PAUL’S immediate purpose in this statement is to emphasize the thought that our salvation can not be brought about by our own self-righteousness but must be accepted as the gift of God’s free grace. His entire statement reads: “I do not frustrate the grace of God: For if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” Some one says that for a man to trust in his own righteousness is like seeking shelter from the heat under one’s own shadow. We may stoop to the very ground; yet, however low we bend, we shall find our shadow beneath us. But if a man flee to the shelter of a great rock, or of a wide spreading tree, he will find abundant shelter from the rays of the noonday sun. Toplady had this in his mind when he sang:

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.”

And the poet had Paul's whole theme in his mind when he continues to sing:

“Could my tears forever flow,
Could my zeal no languor know,
These for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone;
In my hand no price I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”

There are many things which we can not buy, but must take through grace. While Clara Barton was engaged in Red Cross work in Cuba during the Spanish-American War, Colonel Roosevelt came to her desiring to buy some delicacies for some sick men of his command. His request was refused. Roosevelt was troubled; for he loved his men, and was ready to pay for the supplies out of his own pocket. “How can I get these things?” he said; “I must have proper food for my sick men.” “Just ask for them, Colonel,” was the reply of the surgeon in charge of the Red Cross headquarters. “Oh,” said Roosevelt, his face breaking into a joyous smile, “then I do ask for them.” And he got them at once.

So the salvation of our souls can not be bought with any merchandise within our

reach. We are not redeemed with corruptible things. God gave his Son, a free gift, to live and die for us, and we must accept humbly and lovingly God's gift of forgiveness if we would be saved. Dr. J. W. Ackrill was once invited out to tea by a poor widow, and, pitying her poverty, he took something with him for the meal, but, he says, "I'll never do it again." He took two cakes; and when he brought them out and laid them on the table the indignant woman picked them up and flung them out into the street, saying, "I asked you to tea; I did not ask you to provide tea for me." My friend, it is like that with the invitation to salvation. Christ invites, he provides, and he wants nothing but ourselves; and if we take aught else he will reject it. We can only sup with Jesus when we come to him humbly as we are. Are there not some of you who will accept salvation? Say now in your inmost hearts:

"I take the blessings from above,
And wonder at thy boundless love."

But there are other ways of frustrating the grace of God. The man whose whole attention is taken up by this world, who gives his

soul to getting money, or position, or pleasure, or fame, and forgets God, frustrates God's grace. It is a terrible thing to live in God's beautiful world and use our strength and our time and all the wonderful gifts which he has provided for us in nature and in human society not to develop in ourselves a manhood which is pleasing to God and helpful to humanity but to turn all into a poison which destroys our own souls.

I have read of a millionaire in France who was a miser. In order to make sure of his wealth he dug a cave in his wine cellar, so large and deep that he had to go down into it with a ladder. The entrance had a door with a spring lock. After a time, he was missing. Search was made, but they could find no trace of him. At last his house was sold, and the purchaser discovered this door in the cellar. He opened it, went down, and found the miser lying dead on the ground, in the midst of his riches. The door had been shut accidentally after him, and he perished miserably. So many men in America are being ruined by their own prosperity. They use the good gifts of God for their own ruin.

Mr. Moody says that one of his friends once

visited a worldly old man who had acquired large riches. The old man took him through his splendid mansion, and as they went up into a tower to get the view from the top he said, "This is all mine." He pointed to a little town in the distance, "That is mine; it is called by my name." He pointed to a rolling prairie, "That is all mine; the sun never shone on a finer prairie than that, so fruitful and rich, and it's all mine." In another direction he showed him fertile farms, "These are all mine." In continuing he said with pride, "And yet I was once a poor boy. I have made it all myself." The man he was showing about was a true Christian, and he looked the old man in the face and gently inquired, "Well, you have all this on earth; but what have you got up there?" "Up where?" said the old man. "Up in heaven." With a sigh the old man said, "Well, I'm afraid I haven't got much up there." "Ah," said his faithful visitor, "but you have got to die, to leave this world; what will you take with you of all these things? You will die a beggar; for all these riches count as nothing in the kingdom of heaven. You will be a pauper; for you have no inheritance with the saints above."

The poor old man, for he was poor enough in reality, tho rich in the world's goods, burst into tears. He had no hope for the future. His soul had clung to the earth so long that he could not change. Four months later he was dead.

Many a man who never gets rich ruins his soul just as surely in trying to. I am not decrying wealth, and I am not encouraging poverty; but I am urging upon you with all my soul the spirit of Christ's great appeal: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Many parents are frustrating the grace of God by neglecting to bring their children to Christ while their hearts are young and sweet and impressions are made easily upon them. There could be no greater folly than for parents to fail to preempt the minds of children with holy teaching and with divine purposes before the evil one has sown the seeds of wickedness in their hearts. My heart bleeds over this almost more than anything else. Many a time a father or a mother has come to me after children were grown up, in great anguish of soul, because the boy or girl had

been drawn away into wicked associations and become estranged to the influence of the church, when it was the parent's own fault. When their children were young and tender-hearted, and they stood in the place of God to them, they failed to do their duty to win them into loving fellowship with Christ, and Satan did not fail to enter the neglected field. I have read the story of a father who went out walking one hot day in summer with his little girl. He lay down under a beautiful shade tree. The child ran about gathering wild flowers, and bringing them back to the father, saying, "See, papa, how pretty!" At last the father fell asleep, and while he was sleeping the little child wandered away. When he awoke, his first thought was: "Where is my child?" He looked all around, but he could not see her. He shouted at the top of his voice, but there was no reply. He ran to a precipice at some distance, and looked down, and there, upon the rocks and briars, he saw the mangled form of his beloved child, that he loved as his own soul. He rushed to the spot, took up the lifeless form, and hugged it to his bosom, and accused himself of being the murderer of his child, for while he slept his child had come to

its doom. There are drunken boys in this city to-night whose mothers wet their pillows every night with their tears. It is hard to reach them now. Ten years ago they could have been won to Christ for the asking. Let us not frustrate the grace of God by neglecting the conversion of our children, and our Sunday-school scholars, or any boy or girl within our reach.

Another class of people who are frustrating the grace of God, and of whom there are more in the city of Denver in proportion to the population than in any city in which I have ever lived, are the backsliders from the Christian life. There are multitudes in this city, and I do not doubt that many are listening to me now, who have known the great enlightenment of your souls, and yet through failure to do your duty in your new home in putting yourself in fellowship with the church of God and prayerfully seeking to serve Christ, you are losing your joy and endangering your eternal life. I would to God I knew how to show you the tremendous loss which is impending if you do not immediately change your course and renew your vows to God.

Some years ago in a great revival in St.

Louis an old man who in his early manhood had known Christ, but had been a backslider for some years, came into the inquiry-room, sobbed out his soul at the mercy-seat, and found peace. He dried his tears and started home. The next night he came back, and the minister who was preaching saw him in the audience with an awful look on his face. Immediately after the sermon he went to him and said: "My good friend, you haven't gone back into darkness again?"

Said he: "It has been the most wretched day of my life."

"Why so?"

"Well, this morning as soon as I got my breakfast, I started out. I have a number of children, married, in this city, and they have families; and I have spent the day going around and telling them what God has done for me. I told them how I had tasted salvation, with the tears trickling down my face; and I haven't a child that did not mock me!"

The minister said it made him think of Lot down in Sodom. It is an awful thing for a man who has been a backslider to have his children mock him. But it is only a fulfillment of the Scripture which says: "Thy back-

slidings shall reprove thee; know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." With all the earnest love of my heart I call the backslider to repentance here and now. Do not let one other day carry you farther away from God. Do not frustrate the grace which God gave you, or it will condemn you in the day of judgment.

There are others who are frustrating the grace of God. You have been brought up in a Christian land. Your early years were spent in the Sunday-school. You have heard many sermons. You have all your life expected that you would at some time become a Christian. You have never painted for yourself the picture that you would be a godless old man or a godless old woman. And yet you are letting the years go by without obeying Christ and without giving him any public confession. You are frustrating the grace of God by again and again putting the question of your salvation off till some other time. Oh, that the Holy Spirit might use this message to awaken you now to action! It is not more thinking, it is not more deliberation that you need. It is obedience to Christ immediately

that will bring you the forgiveness of your sins, and the peace of God.

One day in one of our hospitals a young man was gradually sinking from a wound which the surgeon could not heal. A few hours before he died a letter came from his sister, but he was too far gone to read it. It was a very earnest letter. A friend who was with him read it to him, but he did not seem to understand it, he was so weak, till it came to the last sentence, which said: "O my dear brother, when you get this letter, will you not accept your sister's Savior?" The dying man sprang up from his cot, and cried, "What do you say? What do you say?" And then, falling back on his pillow, feebly exclaimed, "It is too late! It is too late!"

I thank God that it is not too late for any one here. Christ is knocking at the door of your heart. The Holy Spirit is brooding over you in tenderness. Many Christian prayers are going up to God for your salvation. Yield, I pray you, to the heavenly influence that would lead you to forgiveness and peace!

THE BEWITCHED SOUL

“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?”—*Gal.* iii. 1.

THIS striking metaphor which Paul uses, “who hath bewitched you,” is used for illustration only, and does not in any way endorse the superstition which was very popular at the time, that there were some people who had a kind of serpent power, who were able to cast an evil, dominating eye over others, bewitching them to follow out the evil purposes desired by the one who had cast the spell over them. To Paul the spiritual life of these Galatian disciples seemed as if it had been sucked out of them by the baleful glitter of some evil eye. And Paul is astonished that this should be the case after he had set up before them so perfect an antidote. He says, “Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified.” Some great scholars say that this is a reference to a custom of the time to placard all public

notices or imperial proclamations on the walls of the town, so that every one might see and read, and nobody could mistake. Such had been the kind of preaching Paul had proclaimed among these Galatians. He had as plainly and boldly held up Christ crucified among them as the street placards made evident the decrees of the Roman Emperor, and Paul was amazed that, turning away from "Christ Crucified," they had been bewitched into evil ways and wicked self-indulgence.

From this illustration, as set forth by Paul, to be bewitched is to allow the gaze of our thought and heart to be distracted from Christ as our atoning Savior and to be absorbed by the pleasures or ambitions of the world. It is very much like that with us in America to-day. Christ has been held up before the people and they have looked upon him. You go into the most wicked circles, and they are wicked not because they have not seen Jesus Christ crucified on the cross, but because they have allowed themselves to become bewitched by evil lusts and wicked passions and permitted their gaze to be drawn away from Christ and absorbed by sensual and earthly things.

In a police court in one of our large cities thirty men, red-eyed and disheveled, lined up before the judge—the regular squad of “drunks and disorderlies.” Some were old and hardened, others hung their heads in shame. Just as the momentary disorder attending the bringing in of the prisoners quieted down, a strange thing happened. A strong, clear voice from below began singing:

“Last night as I lay sleeping,
There came a dream so fair.”

Last night! It had been for them all a nightmare or a drunken stupor. The song was such a contrast to the horrible fact that no one could fail of a sudden shock at the thought the song suggested.

“I stood in old Jerusalem,
Beside the temple there,”

the song went on. The judge had paused. He made a quiet inquiry. A former member of a famous concert company, known all over the country, who was awaiting trial in a cell below, was doing the singing.

Meanwhile the song went on, and every

man in line showed emotion. One or two dropt on their knees. One boy at the end of the line, after a desperate effort at self-control, leaned against the wall, buried his face against his folded arms, and sobbed, "O mother, mother"; the sobs cut to the very heart the men who heard, and the song, still welling its way through the court-room, blended in the hush.

Then one man protested: "Judge," said he, hoarsely, "have we got to submit to this? We are here to take our punishment, but this ——" He, too, began to sob. It was impossible to proceed with the business of the court. Yet the judge gave no order to stop the song. The police sergeant, after a surprized effort to keep the men in line, stept back, and waited with the rest. The song moved on to its climax:

"Jerusalem! Jerusalem:
Sing, for thy night is o'er!
Hosanna in the highest!
Hosanna forever more!"

In an ecstasy of melody the last words sang out, and then there was silence. The judge looked into the faces of the men before him.

There was not one who was not touched by the song; not one who had not been made ashamed of his sin, and in whom some better impulse was not stirred. He did not call the cases singly—a kind word of advice and he dismissed them all. No man was fined or sentenced to the workhouse that morning. The song he felt had done more good than punishment could have accomplished.

Now no doubt much of the effect of this was transitory, and doubtless the judge himself expected to see many of them back before him within a week; but it illustrates with remarkable clearness how Jesus Christ, the crucified Savior, the Hope of the world, has been set forth before our people everywhere. It is not that men do not know of Christ. They are bewitched by their passions and the fascinations of the world until they are drawn away from Christ to their ruin. It is not necessary that a thing be evil and revolting in itself in order to cause the ruin of the soul. Whatever draws our hearts and minds away from Christ as our Savior becomes our destroyer.

A young man lost his life in one of the lakes of Eastern Pennsylvania two or three

years ago in a very strange way. He had taken several persons out on the lake to gather the beautiful white water-lilies. In reaching for the flowers the nurse of the family, who was one of the party, upset the boat and all were thrown out into the water. The young man was an expert swimmer and attempted to save the nurse and baby, but became enmeshed in the lilies and sank. When his body was recovered his hands were found bound together by lily stems. The beautiful lily, the most lovely of flowers, the snow-white emblem of purity, became the instrument of his death. So there are many pleasures in life, in themselves as pure and charming as the lily, but if we permit ourselves to become so absorbed in them that we forget the higher things of life they entwine themselves around our very souls and we become drowned in worldliness.

Nothing bewitches so many for evil as a prevailing sentiment against Christ among their associates. We need to be warned that an enlightened conscience, and not the cry of the careless people about us, should be our guide. Many a strong, bright man has been led to his ruin through being over-influenced

by his surroundings. Take the case of Pilate who condemned Jesus Christ to the cross. Pilate was a bright man, and a man who, on the whole, desired to do right. He saw that Jesus was persecuted maliciously and cruelly by the chief priests. Because he was a judge, and a lawyer who liked to see the law obeyed because it was the law, he wished to set Jesus free, and he declared to them that he found him innocent. And then afterward there came the message of his wife, who it seems had come to believe on Jesus, begging him to do no act against the Savior. This deepened the desire of Pilate to do right. But there was the mob, that wild, furious, railing mob that was shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" And at last the crowd prevailed. Pilate gave in to the crowd against his judgment.

That was Pilate's ruin. It gave him a little temporary popularity. It did not last. A few years afterward Pilate was accused of treachery and was recalled to Rome. The old emperor whom he had served suddenly died, the new emperor was unfriendly, and Pilate was banished. He committed suicide, tradition says, by leaping from Mt. Pilatus in

the Alps. He followed the rabble and crucified Jesus, but he died forgotten, neglected, and alone, for nobody will desert you so quick as the people who lead you into sin. The Prodigal Son followed the crowd into all sorts of dissipation, and they drank his health, and flattered him and cheered him while his money lasted, and then left him alone with the hogs when it was gone.

This study suggests to us the tremendous importance of selecting our associates carefully. Our associates who are friendly and intimate are bound to have a great influence over us, and we should not select any one as an intimate associate whose character and conduct are such that we would meet with harm and deterioration if we were to be influenced by his example. The people you choose as your friends, those people, whether they be good or bad, must greatly influence your career. Take the case of Herod. John the Baptist, one of the greatest men that ever lived, a man of supreme courage, who never followed the crowd to do evil but whom the crowd followed out into the wilderness because of the blazing sincerity and genuineness of his speech and the profound and fearless message

which he proclaimed, appeared before King Herod as Nathan did before King David, and frankly and courageously told him of his sins. Herod was greatly shaken. He admired and respected John for his courage and fidelity. He told the eloquent and faithful preacher that he would hear him again about it, and it had a great influence on him. Many noticed the change in his conduct, and for days and days he was under deep conviction of sin and stood on the very edge of becoming a good man.

Then he made a dinner, and those gay and worldly and reckless friends that his sinful and prodigal life had brought about him were at the table. And when the daughter of Herodias came out and danced before him, and the wine was hot in his blood, he said he would give her whatever she asked, even to the half of his kingdom, and her vicious, cruel mother told her to ask for the head of John the Baptist on a charger. Herod was greatly troubled. He had no intention of putting John to death. If he had been alone he would have refused, but for the sake of the people that sat at the table with him—that is, because of the friends who were about him

—he yielded to her, and did the cruel, devilish thing.

Herod was never himself again. A while afterward, when he heard of Jesus Christ, and his miracles, he shivered and was frightened, and exclaimed to his friends, “It is John the Baptist! It is John the Baptist whom I beheaded. He has risen from the dead, and is now doing these mighty works.” His crime unbalanced him. He brought ruin on his own soul by allowing himself to be bewitched by a wicked woman and a crowd of evil friends. No doubt some of you realize a danger of the same sort to your own souls. Only last night a young woman was speaking to me of another young woman who had an evil fascination over her which she had not the power in her own soul alone to withstand. The only safety is to turn to Christ. Keep your eye upon him, and you shall be saved from this evil bewitchment.

Perhaps in our time more are bewitched to the peril of their souls by the insidious fancy that they will be able to follow the path of indifference and sin as long as it is pleasant, and then find Christ as their Savior whenever the great emergency arises. A woman

once came to Doctor Chalmers, the great Scotch preacher, and said: "Doctor, I can not bring my child to Christ. I have talked, and talked, but it's of no use." The doctor said, "Now you be quiet, and I will talk to her alone." When the doctor was alone with the Scotch lassie he said to her, "They are bothering you a great deal about this question; now suppose I just tell your mother you don't want to be talked to any more upon this subject for a year. How will that do?" She hesitated a little, and then said she didn't think it would be safe to wait for a year, something might turn up. She might die before then. "Well, that's so," replied the doctor; "but suppose we say six months." She didn't think even this would be safe. "That's so," was the doctor's reply; "well, let us say three months." After a little hesitation, the girl finally said, "I don't think it would be safe to put it off at all," and they went down on their knees and found Christ. Shall you not follow her example?

CHRIST CURST FOR US

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.”—*Gal.* iii. 13.

THERE could be no stronger declaration of the vicarious sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ in our behalf than is made in this text. The statement is just as definite as human language could make it. Paul, who, after Jesus, is the greatest expositor of Christianity, and who received his commission from the lips of the Lord himself in that wonderful vision on his way to Damascus, declares that by nature we are under the curse of the law. In the very nature of things law can not be merciful. The law does not deal with mercy, but with justice; and the holy law of God decrees that the soul that sinneth shall die. Every one who has sinned is under the curse of the law, and Paul's declaration is that Christ became a curse for us. We could not save ourselves. The sinner had nothing with which to redeem himself, and so the great heart of God, which is of a disposition to pity

like a father and to comfort like a mother, did the only thing that could be done for the sinner's salvation—he gave Christ to be made a curse for him.

It is hard for us to humanize all this enough to make it real, so that it touches our hearts as it ought. S. D. Gordon, in his "Quiet Talks on Power," tells this story as an illustration: A young man of good family is sent away to college. He gets in with the wrong crowd, and little by little is drawn into dissipation. After a while he gets into disgrace with the college authorities and is suspended. He feels very bad and makes good resolutions and earnest promises, and when he returns he does do much better for a time. But it does not last long. Soon he is in with the old associates again, the old round of habits and dissipations, only now it is worse than ever. The end of it all is that he is expelled and sent home in disgrace, never to return.

The pith of the story is found in the way other people take it. First, here is his chum, who roomed with him, ate with him, lived with him. He said, "Well, I declare, I am all broken up over Jim. It is too bad! He was

‘Hail fellow well met,’ and now he has gone like that. I’m awfully sorry; it’s too bad! too bad!’ And by and by he forgets about it except as an unpleasant memory roused up now and then.

And here is one of his professors who knew him best, perhaps, and liked him. “Well,” he says, “it is too bad about young Collins. Strange, too; he came of good family; good blood in his veins; and yet he seems to have gone right down with the rag-tag. It’s too bad! too bad! I’m so sorry.” And the matter passes from his mind in the press of duties, and is remembered only occasionally as one of the disagreeable things to be regretted, and perhaps philosophized over.

And there is his father’s partner, down in the home town. “Well,” he soliloquizes, “it is too bad about Collins’ boy. He is all broken up over it, and no wonder. Doesn’t it seem queer? That boy has as good blood as there is: good father, lovely mother, and yet gone clean to the bad, and so young. It is too bad! I’m awfully sorry for Collins.” And in the busy round of life he forgets, save as a bad dream which will come back now and then.

But in that boy’s home there is a woman—a

mother, heartbroken, secretly bleeding her heart out through her eyes. She goes quietly, faithfully about her round of life, but her hair gets thinner and the grey streaks are plainer, her form bends over more, and the lines become more deeply bitten in her face as the days come and go. If you talk with her and she opens her heart to you she will say, "Oh, yes, I know other mothers' boys go wrong; some of them going wrong all the time; but to think of my Jim—that I have nursed, and loved so, and done everything for—to think that my Jim——" and her voice chokes in her throat, and she refuses to be comforted. She grieves at her heart. There you have a faint picture of God, who had made this wonderful world, and peopled it with children made in his own image and likeness, and then they had sinned and gone astray. God was so grieved at the heart that in his great love for the world he gave his Son—gave him whom he had loved from the foundation of the world—to be born in a manger and to bear earth's poverty and temptation and to be made a curse on the cross for us.

Did you ever read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and put the personal pronoun in, and

try to remember that you are the sinner that is meant in it all? I do not see how any one can do that without a tender heart. Let us try it; leaving out all idea of verses, getting simply at the substance and heart, and writing ourselves into it: "Who hath believed our report? Unto whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when I shall see him, there is no beauty that I should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and I hid my face from him; he was despised, and I esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne my griefs, and carried my sorrows: yet I did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for my transgressions, he was bruised for my iniquities: the chastisement of my peace was upon him; and with his stripes I am healed. Like a lost sheep I have gone astray; I have turned to my own way; and the Lord hath laid on him my iniquity. He was opprest, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before

her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for my transgression was he stricken He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief. He was numbered with the transgressors. And he bare my sins, and made intercession for me.”

How different it seems when we put ourselves into it. I pray God that every one of us may be able to enter with the deepest sympathy of our natures into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and realize that it was to redeem us from the curse of the violated law that Jesus took the curse upon himself.

Mr. Spurgeon once closed a great sermon on this text with this last question: “How many among us can say that ‘Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us?’ ” And he went on to say that the first part of his discourse had not interested some of the congregation because it had been entirely doctrinal. He said it was entirely natural that that should

be so. At the reading of a will the servants do not stay to listen—there is nothing for them; but if a man be a son, he opens his ear to catch the sound, to know if there be an estate for him; and however ill the lawyer may read that will, how anxious he is to catch every word and know if there is a portion for him among the children! So we ought to look upon this text as a title to our inheritance, and ask ourselves very earnest and solemn questions concerning it. We have been under the curse of the law, for we have all sinned and gone astray. Not one here would dare stand up and say, “I have never done anything wrong. I have never sinned against the law of God. My thoughts and my purposes, and my words and my conduct have always been in harmony with the law of purity and love.” Who would dare say a thing like that? Have you never done or said anything that your conscience rebuked you for? And does not the Bible say that God is greater than your conscience? Then know that by that rebuke of your conscience, the curse of the broken law has hung over your head. But Christ has been curst for you. He has taken the stripes meant for your shoul-

ders. He stood and let the lash come down on his bare back, being scourged in your stead. He wore the crown of thorns for you. He was nailed to the cross that he might bear your curse. But have you accepted it? Have you come with humility and confession to receive your inheritance, the forgiveness of your sins, your redemption from the curse which Christ bought by the crimson drops of his own precious blood which he shed on Calvary?

If you can not answer that question in the affirmative with a grateful and a trusting heart then the awful gloom of the curse of the law of God hangs yet above your head, and I beg of you now, without delay, to come to Christ at once, empty-handed as you are, and throw yourself upon his mercy and seek the forgiveness of your sins.

Our only hope is in Jesus. He made atonement for us. We can never have salvation in any other way except in his free grace. Mr. Spurgeon used to tell this story about one of the boys in his Orphanage. Some of the boys had aunts and some cousins, and nearly every boy had some friend who took an interest in him and came to see him and gave him a little pocket money. One day, when Mr. Spurgeon

was visiting the Orphanage, a little boy came up to him and said, "Mr. Spurgeon, let me speak to you." The boy sat down between Mr. Spurgeon and the gentleman who was with him, and said: "Mr. Spurgeon, suppose your father and mother were dead, and you didn't have any cousins, or aunts, or uncles, or friends to come and give you pocket-money, and give you presents, don't you think you would feel bad? Because that's me!" Spurgeon said, "The minute he said that, I put my right hand down into my pocket and took out some money for him."

My dear friend, that is exactly our situation. A Christian father, or a Christian mother, or Christian friends have no power to bring us salvation. They can love us, and pray for us, and live before us, and point us to Christ; but the Christ who loved us infinitely more than they, he only can save us; and we can only come as this little boy came to Mr. Spurgeon, with empty hands, and throw ourselves upon his mercy. Thank God, we know we shall find welcome when we do that, for Christ has said: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

THE WORLD'S CHRIST

"That the blessings of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."—*Gal.* iii. 14.

ABRAHAM stands in history as "the friend of God." He is one of the most beautiful characters in the history of the world—gentle, honorable, patient, forbearing, self-sacrificing for others, never seeking revenge for injuries. He stands as one of the long chain of mountain peaks of humanity that stretched down the way of time, pointing to the coming of the Christ. The greatness of Abraham's life and career came from his faith in God. From his youth up he was a man of worship and of faith. He preferred rather to turn his face to the desert than to pitch his tent toward Sodom, and yet there was no desert so lonely but God appeared to him there. Angels came to visit him. God revealed his purposes to him, and amid the sand-storms of the desert "he looked for a city . . . whose builder and maker is God."

In the many conferences and communings

which Abraham had with God, God made him the splendid promise that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blest. It was a promise of the Christ who should come not to the Jews only, but should be God's gift for the whole world, in whom humanity should be united, who should break down the walls of race and caste and appear as the Savior of mankind. As God's greatest blessing to Abraham in the lonely pilgrimages of his life was the gift of his own friendship, the presence of God with him, his constant protection and inspiration and encouragement, the assurance that God was pleased with him, so the most signal blessing which comes to us through Jesus Christ after the forgiveness of our sins is the consciousness of the presence of God in our lives, the promise of the Holy Spirit which comes to us through faith in Christ.

No man or woman ever has abiding peace and real enjoyment of life who is not conscious of the friendship of God and that God is pleased with him. It is in the very nature of things that the sinning soul can not long have peace. The man who sins against his body in his eating and drinking may have pleasant sensations for a little time, until he

imagines that he and others like him are the only people in the world who enjoy life. But soon the seeds of disease and disaster which he has been sowing begin to bear their fruit, and the burning thirst, the haunting unrest, the shattered nerve, and the dart which strikes through the liver bear testimony that God is true and that "the wages of sin is death."

We have a remarkable scriptural illustration of this in the case of Saul. No man ever threw away a more golden opportunity. He was chosen of God to be king of his people. He came of a good family; he had a great physique, and looked every inch the king. If he had lived a frank, open life, true to God and the interests of his people, his name would have gone down to history as one of the most glorious in all the annals of sacred story. But as time went on, Saul became enamored of himself. He began to think that he was the great king and did not need divine help. The wealth and the power and the constant adulation which he met turned his head, and he became proud and rebellious and selfish and began to do as he pleased without reference to God's commandments. A man

can not do that and not suffer for it. I know there are people who think they can. There are some of you, no doubt, who think you can go on living your selfish and indifferent lives, choosing your own way, knowing that what you do is contrary to God's will, and yet not be harmed by it. You think that five years or ten years from now you will be the same man or woman you are now, only a little older. But, alas! if you go on sinning against God and grieving God's Spirit the evil spirit will come to you as it did to Saul, and the joys of life will depart.

Saul began to lose the old sweet joys of living that he used to know when as a boy he wandered over the hills in search of his father's straying herds; the old sweet life that made him glad just to be alive; the joy that came in simple things; the happy gladness that caused the laughter to ring out with contagious spontaneity at the slightest provocation; the good cheer and good will that bubbled up from the soul and poured forth from his lips as a spring of water bursts out from the hillside. All this disappeared. It disappeared not because the man was so busy, or because his kingly duties took up his

time and attention. Ah, no ; many a man and many a woman fondly imagines that these are the reasons, but it is not so. With Saul, as with you, that overflowing, bubbling joy and good cheer disappeared because the fountain of it was drying up in the soul.

Mr. Anthony Hope, in one of his stories, paints a very graphic scene between two friends who are returning from a dinner-party where the rest of the company, being whole-souled, clean-hearted young men and women, have greatly enjoyed themselves. Innocent jollity ruled among them, and the evening had passed in clean and wholesome delight. These two friends have been the only ones who, while partaking in the gay conversation and joining in the smiling repartee, have each all the while been conscious that they were only in the party and not of it. They have laughed with the others, but their laughter has been hollow. It was only an echo ; there was in it no joy and no enthusiasm. As they went home they began to talk about this, and one asked the other for the reason. The reply was, "It's the devil," and their eyes met in long and serious gaze.

One of these friends was poor and the other

was rich and famous. As the rich friend set down the poor one at his door, something was said about the impossibility of being joyous and glad in the midst of such mean surroundings. But the reply came back quick and sharp, "You don't live here, yet you don't seem to be much better. You are beautifully turned out—gorgeous. And your brougham is most comfortable. Yet you don't seem much better." And so they both went to their homes sad and deprest, and each of them remembering the whole-hearted laughter and the merry "hurrah" of a poor working girl whom they had met during the evening. That laughter seemed to ring out with no obvious cause and echoed with the mockery of an unattainable delight. With true insight the novelist comments, "You need clear soul-space for a laugh like that." Their lives were not sincere; they did not ring true; their souls were filled with hidden schemes that dared not face the sunshine and there was left no soul-space for real joy. Are you treating your souls like that?

It was at such a time in the life of King Saul that David, the shepherd lad, came with his harp. He had learned to play on the hills where he watched the sheep. His tunes had

all the music of the woods and the hillsides—the harvest tunes, the bird songs, and all the sweet and simple melodies that breathed out the simple life of the common folk. And as he played the heart of Saul was drawn away from his sin and his rebellion, and for a time the old simple life of his boyhood had a charm for him. It refreshed his soul, and he felt well again. But, alas! in the new opportunity that came to him he fell back again into his pride and sin, until again the dark veil of the evil Nemesis shut him in.

Our theme brings us a sweeter singer than David, a music more glorious than ever David sang before Saul—a music that can banish the devil from a sinful heart and arouse it to all the new and glorious music of goodness and truth; a music that took that poor drunken tinker, John Bunyan, and cleansed his heart of blasphemy, and made him the writer of “*Pilgrim’s Progress*”; a music that took a poor drunken river-thief like Jerry McAuley, and banished the devil from his heart so completely that he became a messenger of mercy to hundreds of his fellow men. That music, which Jesus Christ alone can sound in your heart, will banish the evil

spirit and awaken the old fountain of pure and simple joys, so that the stream of happiness shall flow again. It is not a music for the head so much as for the heart. The heart is the fountain of life, and you can not know Jesus Christ by your head only. You must open your heart to him, and love him, and obey him, and then you shall know the music of salvation which he can make in your soul. You can never interpret the Gospel of Jesus Christ except by the heart.

Doctor Watkinson, the brilliant English preacher, tells us that John Bunyan had a blind daughter. She lived much with him; he was very fond of her. They said he would not let the wind blow on her. She never saw Bunyan; it was impossible for her to comprehend his genius; she was pathetically incapable of reading his books; and yet, will anybody believe that that blind girl did not know Bunyan? A great many splendid preachers and critics and a whole army of biographers have spoken and written about Bunyan, but that little blind girl knew Bunyan better than any of them. She did not know him by way of the eyes, did not know him historically or technically, but she knew Bunyan; she knew

the man, and looked into his heart. It is just the same with us. We are God's blind children, and we are feeling after him in the dark. We have never seen his shape, we can not comprehend him logically, but we have heard the music of his voice, have felt the pulse of his life, and are conscious of his surrounding presence. God is great, and we know him not; but God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. You know God as you know one another by the interpretation of love. With the heart man knows God. Dear friend, will you now know him? The word is nigh to you, at your very door. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Christ, the divine friend, he who has all the music of heaven in his voice and in his love, waits to enter your heart. Throw wide the door and let him in!

THE SINNER'S HOPE

"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."—*Gal.* iii. 16.

THE whole Bible centers in Christ. In the book of Genesis, when man is in his first despair after being driven from the Garden of Eden, with the flaming sword at his back and the anguish in his heart, there came the first great promise to Eve that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. And ever and anon down the path of history God renewed that promise. And every great soul like David and Isaiah and Daniel who was lifted high enough above his fellows saw the Christ in the distance as the hope of the race. And Christ did come as promised. He bore our flesh. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet maintained his purity of soul. In the fullness of time he laid down his life on the cross in atonement for our sins. He slept in the grave, and on Easter morning he arose from the tomb in glorious triumph, and ever since then through all the rest of the Bible

every guide-board points backward toward the cross on Calvary and the empty tomb where Christ rose from the dead. So all the first part of the Bible points forward to the future to Christ, and all the rest of the Bible points backward to Christ, and running all through the Bible, tying every book together, is a scarlet thread made red by the blood of Jesus shed on the cross for us.

And to-day Christ is the center of the world just as he is the center of the Bible. He stands in the midst of the world as the sinner's only hope. If he be not the Savior of the world, then it has no Savior. There is none other name given under heaven or among men whereby we can be saved. We can not save ourselves, and if we can not save ourselves then surely we have no surplus of resources by which we are able to save our brother. It must be a heavenly hand that can reach down into the midst of our earthly conditions and lift us out of the quagmire of our sins.

There is a story told of a prisoner who was once placed in Germany in a prison of exquisite beauty; its floors and walls were highly polished; it was roofless, and the prisoner

could look out upon the beautiful sky. When he was placed therein he at first congratulated himself upon the polish and splendor of his apartments. He could freely breathe the fresh air and see the stars that decked the brow of night or the sun that rose in glory; but after a time he observed to his horror that the walls were gradually approaching him, softly as the fall of the dew from the hand of night. Noiselessly, as by the force of gravitation, those walls drew nearer, inch by inch, and as they came closer, the cold sweat stood upon his brow, for he saw that they were soon to embrace him in the arms of death. There was but one way of escape, and that was from above; a friendly hand might possibly be put down, but there was no such hand for him.

That prison represents the condition of our humanity. We are brought at birth into a large room, but every day of life brings the walls closer to us; the walls are perceptibly nearer than they were a year ago. They come closer every day, and we know that sometime we shall reach out our hand and touch them. Our only hope is that a friendly hand shall be reached down from above and lift us out into the free air of heaven above us. And that

is just what Jesus Christ is doing ; he reaches down his hand into our dungeons, the hand that has nail-prints in it, made on the cross. It is reached down to every poor prisoner of sin, and if he will take hold upon it, there is power there and mercy there sufficient to lift him up to heaven.

We have in Jesus Christ the one great physician who is able to heal all the sorrows and all the unrest that trouble men's souls. A young French nobleman, who was a particular friend of Napoleon III., became unaccountably gloomy in mind. His melancholy deepened until he seemed threatened with insanity. Urged by the emperor, he applied for **advice** and treatment to a celebrated physician, Dr. Forbes Winslow. He went to London, and the great doctor, after carefully questioning, discovered the character of his disease. He was tormented with a thought—and the thought was : “Eternity ! Where shall I spend it ?” This haunted him day and night. Doctor Winslow told him he could not help him. He had sought in the wrong quarter for his cure. “Is there no hope, then ?” exclaimed the nobleman, in despair. “Yes ; listen to me, and I will tell you how I was

helped and healed," said Doctor Winslow. "When I was younger I had your complaint; and I tried every resource but the right one. At last I carried my case to the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, and he gave me health and peace. Go thou and do likewise." The nobleman was astonished, but he stayed while the doctor read to him the portions of Scripture that had been blest to himself, and after prayer, light and comfort came to him. The new medicine had cured him. The great doctor took his patient to a greater Physician than himself, the only one who has power to heal the maladies of the soul.

Since Jesus is the only Savior, and the one hope of the sinner for pardon, it becomes an infinitely interesting theme as to how people may be brought to Jesus, and it will certainly be profitable for us to consider for a little some of the means by which men were brought to Jesus in the early days of Christianity.

First: Men were brought to Jesus by the preaching of the Gospel. After the ascension of Jesus, the disciples waited for a while in prayer together until there should come upon them the promised presence of the Holy

Spirit. At last they felt the enduement of power, and they went forth to preach. Peter was chosen spokesman and the preacher of the first sermon in the new epoch. And it was on that day of Pentecost that Christianity made its triumphant entry upon the great campaign for the salvation of the world. The sermon was marvelously blest of God, and in the after-meeting that followed three thousand people were converted to Christ and profest that they had received divine pardon in his name.

On another occasion, before Cornelius and his family and all his neighbors and friends, Peter preached the first sermon to the Gentiles. That sermon also was attended with mighty power, and while Peter was preaching the Holy Spirit was so manifestly present in the hearts of the people, and they so surrendered themselves to the truth of the Gospel that Peter stopt his sermon before he was through, opened the doors of the church, and baptized the whole company in the name of Jesus Christ.

There are numerous incidents in the preaching of Paul where people were converted even while he spoke, and from that

day until this the great central agency for bringing men to Jesus has been through the preaching of the Gospel. But I want to call your attention to the fact that in these cases where the preaching was largely effectual it was accompanied by the prayers and faith and devotion of other Christian people. At Pentecost there were a hundred and twenty men and women who loved Jesus as devoutly as did Peter, whose hearts were all aflame with loyalty to Christ and with a desire to bring men and women to their Master. While Peter preached, they were praying, and when the sermon was done, all through that vast audience, everywhere, a man could not turn around without meeting one of the Christians, so that there were really a hundred and twenty sermons being preached, and an atmosphere of faith in Jesus was created by the earnest, loving work of these Christian people.

A sermon backed by such energies as that will never fail of attentive listening on the part of the unconverted. The man in the pew who is a profest follower of Jesus Christ should never forget that he is under just as certain obligation to help make the

sermon effective as is the preacher in the pulpit. The preacher must do his duty, and his whole duty to the last limit of his ability to make the Gospel message attractive and effective in bringing the sinner in the audience to Jesus. But what about the man sitting at the side of the sinner, who has also taken the oath of allegiance to Jesus Christ at the communion altar? Shall he sit in a critical mood, or an indifferent mood, or a self-complacent mood, watching the preacher trying to do his work? If he thus sits he will be condemned of God. The only proper attitude for every individual Christian in the church, when the preacher is pleading with the sinner to come to Christ, is intense and earnest consecrated prayer to God that the word may be powerful and that the Holy Spirit may impress it upon the heart of every poor sinner and bring him to Jesus. A spiritual atmosphere is created in a church like that, that renders it next to impossible for any man or woman to listen to a Gospel sermon and harden his heart against the Spirit and the message.

Second: People were brought to Jesus in the early days by the influence of their rela-

tives. Paul in his letter to Timothy reminds him how he was brought to Jesus by his grandmother and his mother; those holy women so hedged him in with love for God and for Christ that it would have been hard for Timothy to escape being a Christian. Then we have Andrew finding Jesus and at once thinking of his brother Simon Peter. As soon as his heart is glad at having found the Savior, he wants Peter to know it, and so he goes away and finds Peter and brings him to Jesus. People are brought to Jesus in that way yet. We ought to ask ourselves very seriously if we are doing our whole duty concerning our relatives, our children, our brothers and sisters, our cousins—the people who are bound to us by tender ties. Are we doing our duty concerning any of these who do not know Christ? Certainly if we do our whole duty in a tender loving way we can do more than an outsider could to persuade them to come to Jesus.

I have known within the last few weeks the case of a young woman who had been trying for nearly a year to win her sister to Christ. Her sister was not well; the Christian young woman feared she was not to live a great

while, and her heart went out for her day after day, and she prayed and talked with her, and did everything she could to win her to Christ. On one occasion she came to me about it, and asked that I should unite my prayers with hers. Thus it went on until a few weeks since; the sister began to fail rapidly in health and my friend saw that the end would soon come. She redoubled her diligence. One day she went to see her sister, and found her asleep, but the nurse said, "Oh, you ought to have heard the beautiful prayer she made before she fell asleep!" And when she awoke, her face was covered with smiles, and she told how her heart now rested in Jesus and she had perfect peace. A day or two later the physician told her that she was close to the end. She turned with rapturous smile to her sister and said, "Never mind, dear, I shall spend Christmas in heaven with father!" Are you doing your duty by your sister? Are you doing your duty by the brother who has been led astray by the temptations of the wicked world about him? Blood is thicker than water, and God has meant something in putting us in families, and since Jesus is the only Savior, let us not rest day or night until we bring all the family to Jesus.

Third: In the early days people were brought to Christ through the loving influence of their neighbors and their friends who had themselves found Jesus.

Jesus himself found Philip and drew him after him in loving service. Now Philip had a friend named Nathanael, a very good, clean kind of a man, but Philip felt that Nathanael needed Jesus as much as he did, and so he went at once to see him, and told him that he believed he had found the Christ. Nathanael was doubtful about the matter, and asked Philip if he thought any good thing could come out of Nazareth. Philip felt that he was not able to argue, so he answered, "Come and see." That is always the best argument to use with anybody about Jesus. Let men come and see Jesus; let them come and open their hearts to him; let them come and know him, and they will love him. They can not help it. Hugh Price Hughes, the great English Wesleyan preacher, who went home to heaven a few years ago, was one day before a great audience in West London arguing with a supposed antagonist about Jesus, and he put these words into the antagonist's mouth. He made the man say, "But, Mr. Hughes, you

are not impartial; you are prejudiced in favor of Jesus Christ." And Hughes answered, "Prejudiced in favor of Jesus! Of course I am. And who wouldn't be who has known him for thirty years?" Bring a man to Jesus and let him know him, and Jesus will take care of all the rest.

Sometimes, during the ministry of Jesus, men cooperated together in bringing friends to Christ. You remember the case of the four men who had a friend who was sick of the palsy, and as it turned out, still more sick of sin, and they worked together and carried him on his bed and set him before Jesus. So, oftentimes, we can cooperate with each other in bringing people to Christ. We can interest the pastor or some near friend in our child, or brother, or neighbor, and bring three or four to bear upon the one in order that together we may carry them to Jesus. It is wonderful how many ways there are of bringing people to Christ if we are dead in earnest about it and care more about that than anything else.

A man out on the Western frontier, who did not know how to speak in meeting and stammered when he tried to pray aloud,

had nevertheless a passion for souls and longed to see people converted. It was in the country, the snow was on the ground, people had to come long distances to the revival meetings. He had a splendid team of horses; he set them to work bringing people who were not Christians to the meetings. He drove far and wide; every night he had his sleigh-load there. When he got his load into the house, he sat down with bowed head and prayed for them that the Gospel might be effective. When the meetings were over, they counted up and found that that silent man, by the aid of his team, had brought more than twenty men and women to Jesus. If you are sufficiently in earnest about it, God will show you some gift you can use to bring your neighbor to Jesus. Nothing can stop a real soul-winner. They chained a soldier to Paul; they put him in jail; but none of these experiences stopt his winning souls. The late Elizabeth Waldegrave, of London, who was blest of God in the conversion of multitudes of London policemen as well as other multitudes of Scotch fishermen and English sailors, found herself for a long time before her death helplessly confined to her chair. But she did not

stop winning souls because of that. She invented methods by which people came to visit her, for one reason and another, and almost every one who came found Jesus. Only three days before she died, when she could only talk in a whisper, she dictated letters to men and women that led them to Jesus Christ after she was dead.

My friends, what we need above everything else is a passion for souls, a passionate earnestness of conception that sinning men and women are in danger, in danger of infinite and eternal sorrow, and that there is only one hope for the sinner, and that is in Jesus Christ. When we feel this deeply enough, we will turn to our relatives and our friends and our neighbors and the people who come within our reach, and with unselfish devotion seek to bring them to Jesus, who is able to save them unto the uttermost.

CHRIST THE GOAL OF HUMAN ATTAINMENT

"The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ."—*Gal.* iii. 24.

IN order to understand what is meant by the statement that the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, we must take into consideration what a schoolmaster was in the day when Paul wrote this sentence. Students of the time have differing views. Joseph Parker says that as we send our little child to school in the care of some older person, who says, "Come, I will take you to school," and they go together to the place of instruction, so the law was our caretaker, our companion, to take us to our schoolmaster, Christ; Christ keeps the school; those who go to his school are called his disciples, his scholars; Christ says, "Learn of me." Canon Liddon takes another view. He tells us that the pedagogue was a slave who had charge of his owner's children, and who led them to the porch of the one who was really to

give them lessons. But his office was not merely to keep the children in the right path and out of danger; he was a sort of private tutor, who prepared them for the instructions they were to receive from the philosopher or the professor.

But I am inclined to think with men like Dr. S. H. Tyng, that more is meant by the apostle than the ordinary interpretation of the passage. It is not the servant, simply, who was to take the child by the hand, and lead him from the home to the school, and there leave him to be instructed; for that overthrows the whole fulness of the truth as well as the terms of the text. It would make Jesus the tutor, while the law is represented to be fulfilling that office. Under both the Greek and the Roman systems fathers were accustomed to delegate the duty of training their boys to schoolmasters. The child was committed to a tutor who, from the time of his appointment, was to be the never-failing companion of the youth. Under no circumstances was he suffered to allow the child to pass out of his sight. Did the boy go to his pleasures, the tutor watched him at his game. Did the boy seek to elude him

in the bedchamber, the tutor was behind his footsteps. The schoolmaster was his mentor, and in every enjoyment was always present. The duties of the parent were transferred to him. He could flog him for disobedience, he could chide him for heedlessness, and the great end of his office was to subdue him to absolute obedience to authority so as to prepare him for his relations and obligations to the State.

Now this is the illustration which Paul uses to reveal to us how the law of God leads us to Christ. Go where the sinner will, the law of God is his shadow. In the darkness of the night, in public or in private, when the law of God takes hold of a man and he realizes his obligation under its commandment and his subjection to its penalty, the presence of this schoolmaster destroys all peace until the man is brought to Christ and forgiveness is found in his presence.

We must never forget that the law is God's law, and it was given out of the same love that caused the gift of Christ as our atoning sacrifice. While the law restrains us, it is never for our hurt, but always for our good. As Guthrie, the great Scotch preacher,

said, all chains are not fetters, nor are all walls the gloomy precincts of a jail. It is a blest chain by which the ship in the gale rides at anchor and outlives the storm. The prisoner would give worlds to break his chain, but the sailor trembles lest his chain should snap; and when the morning shows a shore strewn with wrecks, he blesses God for the good iron that stood the strain. The captive eyes his prison wall to curse the man who built it; but were you traveling on some mountain trail where the narrow path cut out of the face of the rock hung over a frightful gorge, it is with other eyes you would look on the wall that restrains your restive steed from backing into the gulf below. Such are the restraints which God's law imposes,—no other. It is a fence from evil,—nothing else. There is not one of the ten commandments which is not meant to keep us from harming ourselves or hurting others.

But the inspiring teaching of our text is that in the great purpose of God he seeks to bring us up out of that sphere of living where we are restrained from sin by the rugged law to that plane where we are drawn

to goodness by a magnetism from heaven which appeals to the deep needs of our own nature. We can not imagine that Christ was restrained from murder or dishonesty or selfishness because of the law. Such things were impossible to him because his very nature was attuned to love and truth and justice. So the law necessary to us in childhood and in the development of our nature should be superseded in the growing soul by the love for righteousness and the fellowship we have with Christ in holy things.

The Christian life seems a hard experience when you talk to a man about standing on guard like a sentinel keeping a lonely watch to restrain himself from evil; but how different when you think of him as the guest and companion of the glorious Christ and entering into fellowship with him not only in the noblest thoughts and purest ambitions but in the most exalted and loving service for humanity. We could have no greater theme than this. More than our lives hang on it, our very souls are in the balance. Paul says, "Ye are saved by hope," and John declares that it is the man who has the hope

of becoming like Jesus Christ, who through that very hope purifies himself and becomes pure in soul, even as Christ is pure.

Hawthorne, our greatest American soul-student in fiction, has given us a profound discussion of this thought in his allegory of "The Great Stone Face": Some of you remember how the young man, Ernest, had when a child heard from his mother's lips the local prophecy that some day there should come to the valley one bearing an exact resemblance to the great stone face which they could see in the neighboring mountain, and being the greatest and noblest personage of the time, should be a great blessing to those among whom he lived; and he had taken the prophecy more seriously than the other inhabitants of the valley. As he had greater faith, he had the power of seeing more clearly than his neighbors the grandeur of the strange, stony outline, and so the prophecy meant more to him than to the others, and the hope of its fulfilment entered more deeply into his life.

As the years passed, that hope became stronger and richer. When this one and that one came to the valley and was regarded

as the fulfilment of the prophecy—Mr. Gathergold, the millionaire; General Blood and Thunder, the military hero; Old Stony Phiz, the eminent statesman; and the poet, whose wondrous song glorified both nature and humanity—Ernest had great hope that, at last, the promised man had come; but he was always the first to discover that it was another disappointment. But even as the prophecy's fulfilment was thus deferred, the great stone face seemed to whisper to him, "Fear not, Ernest; he will come." As he thus dearly cherished the hope of the great man's coming, he gave himself to doing good, preparing the people for the great benefactor's arrival, doing the best he could, as he thought the great one would do when he came. As time went on, his life became so pure and high, and his soul so generous and wise, that the people came to him with their needs and troubles. They felt in his presence the benignity of the great stone face and had a greater confidence that one would come who resembled it, until, at length, when Ernest had grown old, with the grey about his face like the mist which often hung about the face in the mountain, the people saw that

he resembled it. His hope had transfigured his features, even as the character of which they were the expression, and the people said, "The man resembling the great stone face is with us."

Now this is only a suggestion of God's purpose for us. John says: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." John declares that man is now already the son of God. He may be a prodigal son, he may be a degraded son, he may have fallen into bad company like the man on the road to Jericho who fell among thieves, and have been stript of many things; but still, robbed and wounded as he is, he is God's son. There is royal blood in his veins, and blood is thicker than water. Man starts out in the race of life with this marvelous advantage, this pledge of possible victory, that he is the son of the Highest.

All appeals to men to rise to a life of holiness and splendid character are on this foundation that man is the son of God, and that

the perfectly good and pure life of God is possible to every man under proper conditions of association and fellowship with the divine nature. We have revealed to us in Jesus Christ this perfect manhood. Man is to be transformed into the Christ life primarily through beholding the Christ.

Canon Scott Holland, in giving some reminiscences of that marvelously sweet singer, Jenny Lind, says that on one occasion she had gone to look on the face of her friend, Mrs. Nassau Senior, after death. The son of her friend had shown her the stairs, pointed out the door of the room where the body lay, put a candle in her hand, and left her. She pushed open the door and entered alone, and there before her lay the face, fine and clear-cut, encompassed with a mass of white flowers. On it was peace, and a smile. But that was not all. Said Jenny Lind afterward: It was not her own look that was in her face. It was the look of another, the face of another, that had passed into hers. She had seen Christ, and I put out my candle and said, "Let me see this thing. Let me stop here always. Let me sit and look. Where are my children? Let them

come and see. Here is a woman who has seen Christ." And who of us have been so poor in our associations that we have not known men and women, and do not know them now, who have seen the Christ with such clear eyes that the spirit of Jesus has passed into them, and possessed them, and glorified them with a glory all his own?

The most discouraging thing about this material, money-mad epoch in which we are living is that so many of us come to be only earth-diggers, money-grubbers, with our eyes in the mire and with no high vision of God and Christ and holiness. That a man digs with a golden shovel instead of a steel one is of no importance to character. A man may be as lost to spiritual vision when struggling for gold in a counting-room as when digging with a pick in a mine. Goethe makes one of his characters say: "My soul has its feelers, not eyes. It gropes, it does not see. Oh, that it might get eyes, that it could look!" And so there are many to-day who are only human moles, who feel their way through the black underground of selfishness and self-indulgence and push up their little piles of dirt and are satisfied. The only way to save such

a soul is in some way to open its eyes to a glimpse of the sky and the upper world.

Christianity has been steadily lifting the world out of the mire by showing men that the perfect manhood of Jesus is possible. Men, seeing the good life, catch hope and take heart for themselves. The Bible describes it, this evolution of the strong and noble character, very clearly when it says: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." You may see a striking illustration of the way in which men grow really great by studying the development of the character of Moses. Moses, in his youth, caught a glimpse of something higher and better than anything he saw in the court of Egypt. It was that which made him choose rather to suffer affliction with his own people than to follow a conspicuous career as an Egyptian prince. But it was in the desert, where for forty years he herded flocks of sheep and had a chance to meditate and commune with God, that his nature was developed and his vision clarified until he saw God and talked with him.

Alfred Hough has recently given us a poem, full of spiritual insight, discussing this

very thought of the growth of soul in Moses.
It is entitled, "Moses at the Burning Bush":

"One day more of common brightness, nothing new in
earth or sky;
Same old valleys, same old mountains, common to the
common eye;
But as Moses looked that morning, things were not the
same to him,
Earth was rich in sound and glory, full, and running
o'er the brim;
Trees rose up aflame before him, voices echoed through
the skies—
On that day his spirit listened, and his soul looked
through his eyes.

"That was why he stayed in Midian, to and fro its pas-
tures trod,
Through long years of weary waiting, waiting for him-
self, not God.
What avails that he should meet us if our eyes are
closed or bound?
What avails his calling, calling, if we hear no voice
nor sound?
All the universe is silent, blank and dead this old world
lies,
Till we listen with our spirits, and our souls see through
our eyes.

"Moses found himself in Midian—came to hearing, came to sight!

All the great deeps of his being rose that morning to full height.

He had learned how near Jehovah to a mortal man can be,

Heard his voice across the desert, seen his glory in a tree.

All the world will weave around us sights and sounds of paradise,

When we listen with our spirits, and our souls look through our eyes.

"Then to Moses seemed that desert like a stretch of heaven's street,

For he bowed low in the glory, took the sandals from his feet,

Rose and gazed straight on and answered, God still looking in his face,

And was not afraid to meet him, out there in a desert place;

For the voice of God is tender, and all fear of danger dies

When we listen with our spirits, and we see with clearer eyes.

"God has not gone into hiding, nor in silence molds his thought,

Only to the eye that's holden, and the ear that hears him not.

That same bush had flamed with glory other days as on the last,

But the man saw the rude outline of a common tree—
and passed.

So we miss the glow of beauty, hear no accents deep
and wise,

Till we listen with our spirits, and we see with other
eyes.

“All the flowers along the valleys, all the mountains
forest-plumed,

Sun and star and men and angels, stand in fire and
unconsumed.

Speech divine as any written in the ancient, sacred
Word

Now is spoken all around us, and may anywhere be
heard.

But the silence is unbroken and the light beyond us
flies,

Till we listen with our spirits, and see farther than
our eyes.

“There are men, as man is measured, walking daily on
the streets,

Who see but a silver dollar, and hear when a big drum
beats;

Trees are worth so much for timber, mountains for the
wealth they hold;

They would trade in air and sunshine if these could be
bought and sold.

Each is but a money market; God has vanished from
their skies;

For their spirit sinks within them; there's no soul be-
hind their eyes.”

THE LONGING OF A SOUL FOR GOODNESS

“Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.—*Psalm* li. 9, 10.

THERE is an historic well in Belgium which once had very pure water, and it was walled with stone and brick; but the well became afterward the center of the battle of Waterloo. At the opening of the battle the soldiers with their swords compelled the gardener to draw water out of the well for them; but the battle raged, and three hundred dead men were flung into the well for quick and easy burial, so that the well of life became the well of death, and years afterward people looked down into the well and saw the bleached skulls, but no water. So the human soul was a well of life; but the armies of sin have fought around it, fought across it, and been slain; and it has become a well of skeletons. Dead hopes, dead resolutions, dead ambitions. An abandoned well unless Christ shall reopen and purify and fill it as the well of Belgium never was. Sin has made un-

clean the heart of man, and unless purified by the divine cleansing through faith in Jesus Christ it casts up evil imaginations holding the poison of death.

Many people live in sin, indifferent and unconscious of their condition, but it is because they do not realize its fearful danger and peril. David lived for a long time seemingly unconscious and indifferent to his great peril, altho he was estranged from God; but when God sent Nathan to him and aroused him to see the wickedness of his heart and of his conduct, his soul cried out for goodness. It may be taken as a typical cry of a soul that has come to see its sin in its true light. David exclaims, "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

This has been called "The Penitent Psalm." It is the outcry of a man's soul. There is nothing in the Bible or out of it that gives clearer evidence of sincerity than this.

It is the cry of a man who has sinned, and whose sin has brought him to the gates of hell. The Bible does not undertake to cover up men's sins. It shows a man's faults just as clearly as it does his virtues. His sins are described in all their hideous ugliness. This fact is enough of itself to prove the credibility of these Old Testament biographies. No man who was fixing up a story concerning a great poet-king like David, seeking to make him immortal, would ever have infused into the story the repulsive tales of his sin. But on the heels of David's sin there came the sharp, keen sense of conviction that threw him into the deepest sorrow and remorse. If it had ended with that, David would have closed his career in gloom and would have died a lost man; but it did not end there. In his sorrow and misery on account of his sins, David turned back to God. He had fallen into the mire, but he did not stay in the mire; he threw up his hands for divine help, and through God's infinite mercy and grace clambered up and out of the mire till he stood on the solid rock. David is called a man after God's own heart not because he sinned, but because, having sinned,

he refused to remain a sinner, and repented and sought and obtained the divine forgiveness.

Sometimes men when they have fallen into sin excuse themselves by saying that David also sinned. But you can not compare yourself to David unless, like him, you are through repentance and confession and faith seeking forgiveness of your sins and the salvation of your soul. You may see this contrast in comparing David with Lord Byron. David and Byron were both great poets; both had the artistic temperament very highly developed; both had that remarkably sensitive organism which is easily wrought upon by outside influences. It is quite possible that they were led into sin in much the same way. Both found sorrow and misery in their sin. But David repented and confessed, and sought salvation, while Byron turned farther from God and became irretrievably lost. One of his poems sets out the contrast. He sadly sings:

“There’s not a joy the world can give like that it takes
away
When the glow of early thought declines in feeling’s
dull decay;

'Tis not on youth's smooth cheek the blush alone would
fade so fast,
But the tender bloom of heart is gone ere youth itself
be passed.

"Then the few whose spirits float above the wreck of
happiness
Are driven o'er the shoals of guilt or ocean of
excess:
The magnet of their force is gone, or only points in
vain
The shore to which their shiver'd sail shall never
stretch again.

"Then the mortal coldness of the soul like death itself
comes down;
It can not feel for others' woes, it dare not dream its
own;
That heavy chill has frozen o'er the fountain of our
tears,
And tho the eye may sparkle still, 'tis where the ice
appears.

"Tho wit may flash from fluent lips, and mirth dis-
tract the breast,
Through midnight hours that yield no more their former
hope of rest;
'Tis but as ivy leaves around the ruin'd turret
wreath,
All green and wildly fresh without, but worn and grey
beneath.

“Oh, could I feel as I have felt, or be what I have
been,
Or weep as I could once have wept o’er many a vanish’d
scene,—
As springs in deserts found seem sweet, all brackish
tho they be,
So, midst the wither’d waste of life, those tears would
flow to me!”

If Lord Byron had turned toward God in the same spirit that David did, he would have found again the fountain of his tears, and his heart would have remained tender and sensitive, and his lost innocence would have been regained. But because he turned to the world instead of to God his heart became only the more hard.

We must not fail to notice that the only true cry of the soul in sin is for goodness. David is not crying out to God because he fears punishment and wants to escape the results of his wickedness. But he feels that his sin is against God. “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.” That is his cry. He feels that he has sinned against God’s mercy. He has done outrage to God’s loving-kindness, and in doing so he has done a grievous wrong to his own nature. He is not the same man that he was. Sin has stained him, and

poisoned his blood, and marred him in every way. He wants to get back; he wants a clean heart; he wants a right spirit. He longs to get free from his horrible load of sin which he is carrying on his back. He feels what Paul exprest centuries afterward when he exclaimed: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And that is the right way to feel about sin. If you have consciously broken the commandments of God, have sinned against him, and you do not feel that way about it, then you are in a dangerous and terrible condition.

David saw the truth: that his sin was giving him all his unhappiness and his sense of uncleanness. Things were going badly with him; but David was wise enough to see that it was not more soldiers nor better officers that he needed most, but that above everything else he needed goodness. I can see the king as he walked up and down in his chamber alone, just before he wrote that Psalm, and I hear him crying out in his agony: "Oh, if I were only a good man! Things would go well enough then. If I were good again, and my heart pure as it used to be when I followed the

sheep on the hills of Bethlehem, secure in my faith in God, fearing neither the lion nor the bear; ah, if my soul were only clean again as it was that morning when I went down to the army, and without a fear in my heart went out with my shepherd's sling to fight the giant; if my lost goodness were only back again, all would go well. But there is no joy for me while my heart is unclean and while this sin weighs down my soul. I will turn from this sin. If I perish, I will perish at the mercy-seat. I will throw myself on my face before God. If anybody is to slay me it shall be God." In that spirit David wrote that prayer—David, the religious man, who had been drawn away into evil. If you look upon him and say, "The message is for me," then whatever the sin may be that has marred you or defiled you, pray David's prayer here and now. Pray the prayer for the clean heart; pray for a right spirit to be renewed within you. Pray that the spirit of the living God may stay with you. Let your soul cry out for goodness to the fountain of goodness in the heart of God.

David longs for the old joy, the joy of salvation. No other joy is like it. There is in-

finitely more joy in the feeling that God has saved you than that you have saved yourself or that your salvation has come through your own wisdom. Then there would be a foreboding that the day may come when your wisdom shall fail you, when you shall lose your cunning and be destroyed. If you have saved yourself by your own strength, you can not but tremble at the thought that age and infirmity are constantly sapping your strength, and some day your enemy will overcome you. But if your salvation is in God, then you know that God's wisdom will never be less, that God's strength will never wane; his love will never grow cold. And so in feeling that you are saved by the divine arm there is a joy that can come from no other source.

David shows here a longing for freedom, the free spirit which can only come to those who are divinely saved. The highest freedom in this world is the freedom known by those who are unreservedly the servants of God. There is no freedom in anarchy; freedom can only come by law. There is no true sense of freedom except where the law is supreme and where men and women are obedient to the law. America has been called "the Land of

the Free'' because here the people make their own laws and then obey them. If it should ever come to be true that we cease generally to obey the laws we make, then we should lose our freedom. There is a law of liberty, but there is no liberty without law. So David, having known the awful misery and anguish of lawlessness, longed to know again the perfect freedom of the man who serves God with a pure heart. Sometimes men give as an excuse for not becoming definitely Christian and identifying themselves with the children of God that they wish to remain free. There could be no greater mistake. Whom the Son makes free, is free indeed. The truest freedom the world knows is that which comes to a man conscious of a clean heart, certain of his salvation through Jesus Christ, who is set free to work with all his might the law of love and purity.

I wish I could make every young man and every young woman understand the importance of giving life at its opening to goodness. The captain understands the importance of knowing his destination, the haven toward which he is to sail, before he leaves port. His

charts, his stores of food and water, everything depends on the length of his voyage and the port toward which he is to guide his ship. So in the greater voyage of life it is of the utmost importance that in youth we shall be firmly fixt in those ideals and ambitions which are to be the greatest source of our power—the sails that are to catch the breezes of heaven that shall waft us onward to our desired haven. In the mercy of God men and women are sometimes rescued and saved from their sins in the mid-ocean of life and turned heavenward; but no such career can ever be as beautiful as that which from the beginning steers a straight course toward heaven.

Some poet sings of an artist who in painting a picture always painted his sky first, which illustrates the message I would impress on your hearts:

“An artist of rare skill,
And genius manifold,
Did not outline the picture till,
In tints of blue and gold,
Upon the canvas lifted high
He spread the colors of the sky.

“And when the sky was done,
He painted all below
To match in every hue and tone,
Until it seemed as tho
The very shadows were in love
With colors copied from above.

“But when the work begun
Was finished, ’twas so fine
They did not think of sky or sun,
But only how divine
The landscape was; how cool and sweet
The spot where lights and shadows meet.

“Yes, let the sky come first;
This is the lesson taught.
That lifetime is, alas, the worst
Whose sky is latest wrought.
For, finished with the greatest care,
Something is always lacking there.

“God first, earth last!
What better rule than this
If thou dost wish the work thou hast
To be a masterpiece?
Then smallest touches, lightly given,
On earth and seas, are toned to heaven.”

THE SERPENT THAT LURKS IN THE BROKEN HEDGE

“Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.”
—*Eccles.* x. 8.

THE picture suggested in the text is that of an old hedge around a country garden. The hedge has stood there for a long time. It has grown up thick and strong and protects with thorny fidelity the garden within from any prowler without. It has been so long undisturbed that it has become a lurking place for serpents and things that hide from the light of day. The man who will break through a hedge like that must be on his guard against the serpent that lurks, for he will be in danger of its fangs. The original suggestion of the text was with reference to law, and its message was that whoso undertakes to overthrow government or interfere with the law made to protect and defend society arouses a sleeping serpent.

The text is not without its pertinent message to us in the present struggle which is

going on all over the land against the tendency to lawlessness in our great cities. We need to have the emphasis constantly laid upon the great truth that danger always lurks in permitted lawlessness. The great law-breaker of our modern cities is the liquor traffic, with the crimes that fester in it and grow out of it. Some people seem to imagine that this iniquitous system can be permitted to break the Sunday laws and other laws, while the city administration dozes and the public winks at such violation, and that nothing further will come of it. That is a great mistake. Disrespect for the law is the very essence of anarchy, and liquor saloons that break the law and escape punishment for it are breeding anarchists on every hand.

But it is rather the personal application which I wish to make at this time. Let me call your attention to some of these hedges which are never broken without peril. First, whoso breaks the hedge of his *innocence*, a serpent shall bite him. Innocence is a great hedge. It protects one from a thousand dangers. A young man who has been brought up in a pure home, sanctified by prayer and song, where he has breathed an atmosphere of

reverence toward God and loving sincerity toward his fellow men, has a great deal to thank God for. But how often a young man comes out from such a home almost ashamed of his innocence. He wants to "see life," as he calls it. Ah, if he only knew that behind that hedge is his safety. He thinks he can break through the hedge and taste of the forbidden waters, moisten his lips with the stolen sweets, and go on his way without harm. But he is mistaken. The moment he breaks the hedge he is bitten with the fangs of the serpent. He does not find it so easy to stop as he thought. It is much easier to find a man who has never committed any particular sin you can name than to find one who has never committed that sin but once. Cling to your innocence. Thank God for the hedge that has held you back and do not try to break through it. Be sure that if you do you will not miss the fangs of the serpent.

Here is a youth who has been brought up behind the hedge of total abstinence from strong drink. Now he is tempted to break it. Break it, if you will, my friend, but remember that the word of the wise man is still true, when he says: "It biteth like a serpent, and

stingeth like an adder.” A friend of mine who edits a country paper in another State sent me a copy of his journal, in which he had printed a letter from a man convicted of murder. The letter is from the murderer to his son and is such a tremendous piece of testimony, backing up the proposition of our text, that I feel I can not do better than give it to you. It is evidently a letter that just bubbles up out of a man’s broken heart. This saddest of men says: “It is with a heart full of sadness that I write you this from the county jail, where I am now confined. I am in an iron cell, eight by sixteen feet, where I am kept day and night. The room contains only a stove, an iron bedstead, a hard mattress, and some blankets. If you live to be old enough, I want you to visit the place where your father spent his last days, and let my fate be a lesson to you. My cell is the second one on the right. As you look in I hope that you will realize that right here I spent many an hour of fear and anguish on account of your welfare. Many a time I have hugged you to my breast, and while I loved you with all the tender affection that a father can feel for his baby I would rather you had died in infancy

than to follow the life I have led. One thing that is the earnest wish of your loving father is that you do right in all things from the time you are old enough to know right from wrong. . . . You will meet with evil temptations, but never submit to the *first* temptation to do wrong. Be industrious and economical; love and fear God; and success will crown your efforts. Remember that poverty does not degrade you or make you unhappy. Nothing will degrade you but sin. The wages of sin is death. Above all, never touch whisky or any strong drink. Never think you can take one drink without it harming you. Every drunkard has seen the time when he could let drink alone. Intemperance has ruined more men than every other evil in the world. When whisky gets the advantage of a man he is fit for no business or position in life. All the demons of hell combined could not contrive or invent anything that would be a worse curse to humanity than whisky. . . . When I was young my life was promising. I was the idol of my parents, and was well thought of by everybody. There was nothing to keep me from growing up a good man; but I learned to love whisky. At first I would only

take a social drink with friends; but I kept on taking it until the appetite grew on me, and I could not stop. It led me to where I am now. Never touch it, my boy. Remember your father's warning."

And that is only one of ten thousand warnings like it of men who have been the idol of their parents and their friends; but, breaking through the hedge of sobriety and safety, they have been bitten with the poisonous fangs of the serpent.

In New York City is a man who has been three times tried for his life, and whose whole career, whatever the final result, is forever darkened. A few months ago, after his last trial, that man said, while still declaring himself innocent of the charge on which he had been tried, that he desired while the matter was still fresh in the public mind to warn every young man from even tasting strong drink. He vowed that all his trouble came from one single glass of wine. And yet young men go on, stumbling over one another to get at the hedge, breaking through, but never escaping the serpent.

Some of you have been brought up behind the hedge of Sunday-school attendance and

regular churchgoing. More of your morality and uprightness of character has come from that than you are able to appreciate. Now you come to the city, and you are tempted to trade the Sunday-school for a Sunday outing, to exchange the prayer-meeting for a game of cards, to give up the Sunday-evening service for a social visit. All this looks harmless enough to you at the start. But it means that you are breaking through the hedge of morality and righteousness, and the serpent is there, and you will not miss its fangs. Sin is often fascinating, but it is the fascination of evil, and it hypnotizes the soul to destroy it.

A naturalist who has been traveling in South America tells how he was once walking in the forests of the Amazon River collecting bird-skins for mounting. He was threading a forest path, carrying in hand a gun loaded with very fine bird-shot, while his Indian guide followed, carrying a heavier gun charged with buckshot to use in case they should come upon a jaguar. A bird of brilliant plumage flew into a tree which overhung the path, and as he peered into the foliage trying to discern the bird he became aware of

something swaying before his eyes and a flashing of prismatic colors producing on him something of the impression of a kaleidoscope. So unobtrusively had this thing come into view that it dawned only slowly on his mind, preoccupied with the search for the bird, that the object so softly reaching toward him was the head and six feet of the neck and body of an enormous water-boia. From its mouth the forked tongue was shooting and vibrating, and changing lights were flashed from its eyes, bent upon the hunter. With his cocked gun in hand he did not think to use it or to run away, but stood gazing, literally spellbound, as the snake, slipping from the bough on which it lay, advanced its head toward him.

Suddenly he heard his guide shout from behind him. The snake's head drew back with an angry hiss as the Indian crowded past him, raising his gun to his shoulder as he did so, and with the loud crack! crack! of the two barrels he seized the hunter with both arms and rushed him away from the place. Then he saw the snake, which had dropt from the tree, writhing and twisting in the path—a monster twenty-eight feet long and of girth

in proportion. Its head was shattered by the two charges of buckshot, but the convulsions of the body were enough to show the reptile's enormous strength and give an idea of how the naturalist would have fared if once it had thrown its coils around him. The boa would have done this in a few moments more if he had been left to himself. If the guide had not rushed to his aid, he would have stood still, fascinated, and never would have stirred to avoid his fate. The snake had hypnotized him beyond the power of resistance or retreat. No wonder the enemy of our souls and the sin which deludes and destroys men are compared to a serpent.

Now I know that as I have been speaking the Holy Spirit has compelled you to think about your own sins and temptations. Some of you have said, "He has not spoken of my sin at all. I would never be tempted to drink, or to sin in the ways he has suggested." That may be so, and yet the sin which does tempt you may be just as deadly and loathsome as those of which I have spoken. Some are tempted through their affections. They are tempted through the tenderest and most gentle part of their nature. Alas, how many

are slain under the name of love! As one said once in France about liberty, "What crimes are committed in thy name!" so in the name of love, most beautiful word in any language, multitudes are poisoned and blighted and destroyed. No one ever yet has broken the hedge which separates innocent and pure love from a guilty and unlawful love without feeling the fangs of the serpent. Every new sinner thinks that in some way he will be an exception; but when he comes to drink the bitter dregs he realizes how fearfully he has been cheated. My friend, there is only one way to happiness and peace, and that is the path of goodness.

Some one says, "But I have already broken the hedge, and I am already bitten by the serpent. What hope have you for me?" There is just one hope; and that is the back track. Repent of your sins. I do not mean simply to feel sorry about them. Men have gone to hell feeling sorry. Indeed, they never go there feeling any other way. Repentance is not only feeling sorry; it is turning away from your sins. You have been going wrong. Turn around and go right. Just face about, and then humbly ask for pardon for your sins

through Jesus Christ, who died to redeem you. He will forgive you, and he will cleanse your heart. He is the great Physician, and he can heal the malady of your sin. Come to him now!

THE GUEST AT A PRINCE'S WEDDING FEAST

“And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not a wedding garment. And he was speechless.”—*Matt.* xxii. 11, 12.

No MORE striking story is found in literature than this one which Jesus tells of the wedding of the king's son. The prince, the heir-apparent to the throne, was to be married, and the king proposed to give a great feast in his honor in connection with the wedding. The invitations were sent out to many noted and distinguished guests; but for some reason they would not come. The king was not easily insulted, and sent a second time to remind his guests that the time of the wedding-feast had arrived and that the banquet awaited their coming. Some of the guests laughed at the king's message and made light of it, while others, more vengeful and wicked in spirit, took the servants and beat them, and some of them were killed. When the king heard of it, he sent forth an army of troops to destroy the town in which they lived and to punish them severely.

The king then decided that his son's wedding should not be without the honor of the usual feast, and that, since the guests who had first been invited had proved so unworthy, he would send out into the highways and along the hedgerows and gather up the poor and the hungry, the people who would be glad to get a good meal, and furnish the table with guests who would at least have the grace of gratitude. So the servants went forth and gathered in every ragged and hungry man they could find, until the table was crowded.

Of course these people had no opportunity to make special preparations in the way of clothing, and many of them, no doubt most of them, had no clothing that would be appropriate to wear at the wedding-feast of a prince. The king thought of this, and provided wedding garments for all his guests, and on their arrival at the palace they were met by the servants with the proffer of everything that they needed to make them fit to sit down at the table of a king.

It speaks well for that crowd, gathered up as they were from the highways, of all classes of people, that all but one availed themselves of this gracious provision of the monarch.

But there was one man in whom all the kinder graces seem to have died. His heart was hard and unthankful. He took what he could get, without gratitude, and in his self-will and pride (God knows he had little enough to be proud of!) refused to do anything that would show kindness toward another. Of all the people one meets, these are the saddest specimens of human life. So we can see this man as he comes in in his rags and dirt, and when he is met by the attendant with the offer of the wedding garment and the beautiful privileges of the palace to make his toilet, so that he shall appear a respectable guest in the king's house, he refuses with a curse. "The king invited me here to a feast," he said, "and I am hungry enough to eat what he has, but I'll not wear his garments nor duck my head in any sort of obeisance to him." So he strides on into the dining-room and rudely presses into the best seat he can find at the table.

When all are served, the king comes in to do honor to the occasion and to meet his guests. His eye glances around the table with a look of benevolent satisfaction. His kind and gracious heart rejoices that his son's wedding-feast should give happiness to so

many people to whom happiness is by no means a steady companion. But suddenly there is a look of pained astonishment on the king's face. There, in a conspicuous place at the table, sits a sturdy-looking man, clad in garments which are filthy and ragged, his tousled hair uncombed, his face and hands unwashed, eating as tho he had come out of the gutter to the table. The king calls an attendant, and pointing to him, says, "How does this come? Was not every one of the guests offered a wedding garment and opportunities to properly cleanse and prepare himself for the feast?" "Yes, your Majesty," replied the attendant who had supervision of the feast, "but that man whom you notice refused with a curse the proffer of a wedding garment, and rudely said he would eat your feast, but he would not wear your colors or do anything to show respect for you."

A stern look now came into the monarch's face. He strode down the room till he was opposite the offender, and then said to him, not angrily, but with a voice of earnestness that riveted every eye upon him: "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" The king would not con-

demn him unheard. There might have been some ignorance, or some explanation, and so he accosts him as a "friend," and gives the man a chance for his life. But face to face with the king the offender was speechless. He had no excuse to make. His sin had overtaken him, and he was taken away to prison in shame and disgrace.

Jesus Christ says that the kingdom of heaven is like that. God has made a wedding-feast for his Son and he has bidden all mankind. There is no caste or aristocracy about the invitations to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The poorest man has just as tender and loving an invitation as the richest. The man who has been broken on the wheel of misfortune, or who has been stained with out-breaking sins, nevertheless has his invitation to come to the King's palace, to put off his rags and his filth, and find himself cleansed and purified and arrayed in garments of righteousness. How rich these invitations are! Here is one of them in Isaiah: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." How

could there be a more gracious invitation, or one that would make it surer that the most discouraged and sinful man is invited to the marriage supper of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Who are the people that are rightfully represented by this man who thrust himself forward to the king's table but at the same time refused the wedding garment?

First, every man who receives the blessings and mercies of his daily life without returning sincere and loving thanks to God is at the feast of life with no wedding garment. Everything we have comes from God as his gift. The sunshine is God's gift. The rain and the snow that water the earth and make it fruitful are God's gifts. The strength to toil, the wisdom to plan, are God's gifts to us. The wonderful combination of the senses, through which we are able to hear and see and enjoy the sights and sounds and harmonies of the world in which we live, are God's gifts and a part of the feast of life. All the faculties by which through friendship and sympathy and love we take comfort and happiness in one another are a part of the gracious feast of life to which we have been invited by the King of kings. And when a man takes all these things,

takes them even aggressively, as tho they belonged to him, and yet takes them as the churl without a word of thanksgiving to the great King whose benevolences and loving-kindness have bestowed them upon him, is he not acting in the same hard and unthankful way as that rough, coarse fellow from the street who refused to clothe himself appropriately to sit at the king's table? It can not but be degrading and hardening to any man or woman to receive the great mercies of God without gratitude and worship. If this pictures your case, then I pray God that shame may mantle your cheek and that there may rise up in your heart a purpose to no longer live in such a mean attitude toward your Heavenly Father.

Every one who comes into the house of God, where Christians are lifting their hearts in sincere worship, hoping to meet the King and feast upon the smiles of his countenance and give back to him the tenderest gratitude, and yet lifts no heart of thanksgiving to God, is at the King's feast without the wedding garment. To regard the church service as a matter of entertainment or culture simply, whether it be in the music or the speaking or the social fellowship, without having ten-

der regard to the wishes of God, seeking to show respect and honor and love to him, is to sit at the King's table in the filthy rags of one's own self-righteousness, having refused the King's garment.

This is especially true in times of revival, when invitations are going forth not only from the preacher in the pulpit and from Christian friends, but invitations from the very heart of God, borne by the invisible Spirit, wooing the heart to turn away from the filth of sin and yield to the persuasions of the King and enter upon the feast with joy and gladness. I am sure the King's messenger has found some of your hearts with his invitations in the last few days. On the highway and along the hedgerow of sorrow and sin, of doubt and fear and selfishness, God's swift-winged messenger has found his way to your heart. He has borne you God's invitation to come to the feast of salvation, and he bids me to continue the invitation and assure you that it is God's will for you to "Come, for all things are now ready," and with all these invitations in your ears, and while some about you are making ready, while others are casting away their rags of self-

righteousness and their torn and spotted robes of sin and are putting on the white garments of forgiveness and love, fitting themselves to feast at the King's table, to do honor to the marriage of the Prince, your Savior and Lord, you refuse it all, and thrust aside the proffers of the wedding garment, and sit at the table in your sins.

But at last, as the supper drew near to its close, the King came in. Then came sorrow and trouble and speechless anguish to the man who had been guilty of such sins and folly. He has sinned against benevolence and love and now had no excuse to offer when swift and terrible judgment came upon him. Dear friends, the feast of life is passing; swiftly one course after another is being taken from the table; many things that were possible for you twenty years ago, ten years ago, five years ago, it may be only one year ago, are not possible for you now, and never come back to you again. As a man rudely putting aside some course in a dinner until the servants take it away and the dinner proceeds finds no way of going back to it again, however much he may desire to do so, so you and I, standing where we are now, can see that the feast of

life is swiftly going past us. The King will soon come in to look over his guests and to give the crowning experience to the great feast in the honor and glory of his presence. How will it be with you when the King comes in? Have you on the wedding garment? Have you permitted God's attendants to cleanse and purify your soul and fit you to do honor to the holy feast? I press these questions home upon your heart. The time will soon pass when it will be profitable to ask them. For when the King comes in to close the feast, and we are ushered into eternity, then we must give an account of our stewardship and of our character.

Surely we have had opportunities and privileges to know our duty. The Bible with all its light and revelation is an open book to us. Christ walks to-day in mercy and benevolence, in books and papers, and in living ministries on every hand. The Holy Spirit has spoken to you again and again, and now as God's ambassador I come with the message from your Heavenly Father, to entreat you to put away your sins and clothe yourself with the garments of heaven. To do that you need only

to put yourself into the hands of the King's servants. Repent of your sins, turn away from them, obey Christ, and God will send his angels to clothe you with the beautiful graces of the Spirit.

DOGS AND ANGELS

"The dogs came and licked his sores."—*Luke* xvi. 21.

"The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."—*Luke* xvi. 22.

It seems a far cry from a beggar's pallet at the street gate, where the dogs come and lick the sores of the helpless mendicant, to the angels and the heaven which is their home; but Lazarus tested them both to the full. It seems a long leap from the rich man's palace, with its luxury waiting on the slightest desire and servants quick to run on any errand, to the hell of torment, with not even a drop of water to cool the parched tongue, yet Dives ran that full gamut of experience. Surely this is a story of strange contrasts, and despite the horror which its completion arouses in the mind, we can not but feel that it is a marvelous case of poetic justice. We must agree with Henry Melvill that Dives finds only the just retribution of his selfishness. With wonderful precision the punishment is adapted to the sin. During the life of Lazarus he had lain at the rich man's gate, whence he

could behold the pomp and hear the revelry which reigned in the gorgeous mansion, asking only for the crumbs that fell from the table, and seemingly denied even these. But after death the rich man and the beggar are literally made to change places. Dives is placed where he can be a spectator of the happiness of Lazarus, and he desires—but desires in vain—a single drop from those gushing fountains which he sees on the other side of the gulf.

You can but observe how accurately Dives has become what Lazarus was and how Lazarus has been put into the position of Dives. Lazarus was the beggar; but now Dives begs. Lazarus saw, tho he was not allowed to share, the abundance of Dives. Dives now sees the abundance of Lazarus. Lazarus asked for the crumbs and Dives asks for a drop. Crumbs were refused, and now even the drop is withheld. Thus the selfish man is made to feel his selfishness through being placed in the precise position of the poor man whom his selfishness had caused him so cruelly to neglect. It may be thus in regard to every other sin, that the wicked will be so circumstanced in the future that their sins will be

forced on their recollection, and thus conscience be kept forever on the alert, forever on the fret; so that every man will feel that every stroke beneath which he writhes is a reflected blow of his own sin rebounding on himself.

No other picture in the Bible sets before us in so graphic a way the awful folly of an immortal soul trying to satisfy itself with merely worldly things. It is a perfect portrayal of that living death in which any man exists who gives himself over solely to business or pleasure and crushes out the higher spiritual nature.

John Ruskin illustrates the horrible results of a material life which forgets God and immortality and heaven by recalling the old Scythian custom when the head of a house died. He was drest in his finest clothes, set in his chariot, and carried about to his friends' houses; and each of them placed him at the head of the table, and all feasted in his presence. Suppose, now, it were offered to you, in plain words, as it is offered to you in dire facts, that you should gain this Scythian honor, gradually, while you yet thought yourself alive. Suppose the offer were this: You

shall die slowly; your blood shall daily grow cold, your flesh petrify, your heart beat at last only as a rusted group of iron valves. Your life shall fade from you, but, day by day, your body shall be drest more gaily, and set in finer chariots, and have more orders on the breast, and, if you wish it, crowns on the head. Men shall bow before it, stare and shout around it, crowd after it up and down the streets, build mansions for it, and feast with it at their table's head. Your soul shall stay enough within it to know what they do, and feel the weight of the golden dress on its shoulders, and the furrow of the crown-edge on the skull—no more. Would you take the offer, verbally made by the death angel? No, I am sure you turn away from it with scorn. Yet how many are grasping at that very thing. It is what every man is seeking who wants success without knowing what life really is, who means by success only that he is to get more money, a finer house, more honors; and not more sonship before God, not more soul, more brotherhood toward his fellow men. He only is advancing in life whose heart is getting softer, whose blood warmer, whose brain quicker, whose spirit is entering

into living peace; and the men who have this life in them are the true lords and kings of the earth—they, and they only.

When we get to this point we can understand how Dives and Lazarus, dying at about the same time, each went to his own place. For while they were in this world, Dives, tho he lived in a mansion, had the spirit of a beggar; his soul was narrow and mean and selfish, and when the body was destroyed the spirit went to the realm of evil spirits, where it belonged. Lazarus, on the other hand, tho he had fallen into dire poverty, and his friends (who were not much richer, except that they could use their limbs) could only carry him around and lay him at the gate of one rich man after another, hoping to win compassion, nevertheless had the soul of an angel. His heart was pure, his soul was large and noble. Lazarus had the spirit of a king, and when the poor afflicted body fell at last into complete dissolution, like a decaying house broken down by the wind, the angels came as a matter of course to escort him to the skies. The truth is, Dives was dead while he lived; but Lazarus had in him the true life that never dies.

The Bible is full of words which lay strong emphasis on this distinction between the life of the body and the life of the soul. "Whoso findeth wisdom," says the writer of the Book of Proverbs, "findeth life." "Thou wilt show me," says the Psalmist, "the path of life." "Lay hold of life," says St. Paul. "I am come," says Jesus, "that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly." And still again the Master says, "Enter into life." What is this life which one may enter into, lay hold of, follow, attain; this conception of living and dying which lies like an atmosphere around the whole Bible story? As Doctor Peabody of Harvard University said in a vesper address to the students: "It is not simply a pleasant figure of speech by which the facts of the body are transferred to the experiences of the spirit. On the contrary, it is affirmed, not figuratively, but as literal truth, that this way of life which one may choose is life itself." Paul says, most definitely, "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life." Life is not a matter of the lungs or the heart. A man may be living in bodily health and yet he may be in reality a sick man or a dying

man; or he may be sick in body as was Lazarus and yet be full of life. These are earnest questions to put to ourselves: Am I alive or am I dead? How much alive am I? Am I a sick man, a dying man? Behold, there is set before me this day life and death; which do I choose?

Every man and woman must answer this question which we are trying to enforce upon your hearts when we urge you to choose the way of life by surrendering your will to God. It is imperative that you choose life or death. How often the devil deceives men as to which is life and which is death. Sometimes a young man, chafing under the restraints of home, goes like the Prodigal Son to the city, and he says, "I am going to see life." But it is not life that he sees; it is death. He thinks he is at a feast when he gives himself over to self-indulgence and to riotous dissipation; but it is really a funeral. There is a deep and sublime truth in the words which Christ puts on the lips of the old father in the story of the Prodigal, "This, my son, was dead, and is alive again!"

This story teaches us with tremendous realism that we can not get away from our-

selves. If we do not like what we are, we can not run off and leave ourselves, not even when we die. The only way to remedy the case is to invoke the divine power of God to forgive our sins, purify our hearts, and take out of us that which is evil. Punishment of sin is not an arbitrary thing on the part of God; it is inherent in our very nature.

The story is told of a very prominent and wealthy man in a Western city, who was taken sick a few years ago and lost his mind. When he recovered from his sickness he was still a deranged man. He seemed to never know his own wife or children. He forgot all his old friends. For seven long years he was in this unhappy state. One day, while sitting in the room where his daughters were, he sprang from his chair and cried out in great joy, "Thank God, I am out at last!" It would be impossible to describe the scene at that hour. He embraced and kissed his daughters. He wept with joy on the bosom of his wife, and acted exactly as tho he had not seen them for many years. At last he said to them, "For seven long years I have been in a burning hell. It was a horrible cavern of lakes and rocks and mountains of fire. I saw millions there,

but could find no friend. I was ever burning, yet never consumed; ever dying, yet never dead. No light of the sun shone there, and no smile of God was seen; I thought of the sufferings and death of that blessed Savior, and how I treated him in my strong young manhood. There was no rest for my soul day or night. I had no hope there. Yet I wandered in madness to find some way of escape. At last, as I stood on the top of a high rock blazing with heat, I saw in the distance a little opening like the light of the sky. I jumped headlong down, and with all my powers made my way toward it. At last I climbed up to it and worked and struggled through; and blest be God here I am again, with my beloved wife and children." This is a terrible suggestion of that fact which must be evident to every one of us, that so long as memory lasts and remorse is possible the human mind and heart of a sinning soul carries all the elements of hell in its own bosom.

The tenderness of God, the divine love of God, which was so great as to give Christ to die to redeem us, can not save us from this hell which our own nature makes certain unless we forsake our sins and yield ourselves

to God. The tenderest chapter in the Bible is the one in which Jesus Christ tells of the certainty of heaven for the pure soul and of eternal sorrow for the wicked.

Mark Guy Pearse says that when he was a boy he could not think of the judgment without thinking of the Judge sitting on the great throne as one who was harsh and hard. But one week there was a case in the county court where he lived that stirred the deep interest of the country. A poor girl was being tried for the murder of a baby that somebody had left with her. Mark's father had some business at the court, and when he came home he told the boy all the story—how the judge had put on the black cap, and how he could scarcely speak the sentence, his voice was so choked with emotion; how he sank back when it was spoken and buried his face in his hands and sobbed; and how, as the warders came to take her away, the judge said, "Touch her gently, poor thing, poor thing." "Then," says Mr. Pearse, "I knew how Jesus looked when he spoke those words about the judgment."

But tho the love of Christ can not save us from sentence on the judgment day should we continue in sin, it can save us now. "To-day

is the day of salvation." "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." To-day if you come to him, just as you are, he will not say you nay. No, indeed; he will open his arms to welcome you, and you shall hear his voice, tender with sympathy and sweet and musical in divine forgiveness.

CHRIST'S ANSWER TO THE HARD QUESTIONS OF LIFE

“And when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions.”—*I Kings* x. 1.

THE Queen of Sheba ruled over one of the richest and most beautiful lands known to the earth in her day. It was situated between the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea in southwestern Asia, and so fertile and beautiful was it that the poets have ever called it “Araby the Blest.” It is the land that Thomas Moore has described as a country—

“Whose air is balm; whose ocean spreads
O’er coral rocks and amber beds;
Whose mountains, pregnant by the beam
Of the warm sun, with diamonds teem;
Whose rivulets are like rich brides,
Lovely, with gold beneath their tides;
Whose sandal groves and bowers of spice
Might be a Peri’s paradise.”

Into this beautiful land, rich and splendid,
and which was ruled over with such wisdom

that it was called "the happy land," wonderful rumors had come of the great Solomon and his marvelous wisdom. Finally the Queen of Sheba determined to make a pilgrimage into the north and see Solomon and all his glory. But one of the great things that moved her heart was an irresistible longing to get an answer to some hard questions concerning God and her relation to him. She had heard that Solomon was wise not only concerning the riddles of human life in this world, but that he knew God and could answer those great problems that she had tried in vain to solve.

We may see suggested in the pilgrimage of this great queen, by far the greatest of her day, that there are some questions of the heart which can never be silenced by worldly things. Here was a woman who was a queen over a great nation, famous for her beauty, her wealth, and her power; she lived in a marble palace, in a land that was a dream of beauty and riches; countless millions owned her queen, but all these could not silence the great questionings of the soul, and she was willing to undertake any pilgrimage if she might thereby find an answer that would give

her peace. Let us learn the lesson. No amount of worldly success, however abundant or splendid it may be, will give peace to the imperious questioning of your heart. The rich fool of the Gospel, who planned to feed his soul on the things he raised in his fields and crowded into his barns, was not a greater example of folly than are the men and women of to-day who imagine they can quiet the soul by any degree of worldly success or any amount of worldly riches.

We do not have given to us, definitely, the questions which the Queen of Sheba propounded to Solomon concerning the name of the Lord; but there are some fundamental questions which men have been asking in every land that we are sure she might have put to him. They are questions which are just as interesting to men to-day; and, thank God, Jesus Christ can answer them all to our complete satisfaction.

The first questions, I imagine, were, "Can I know God?" "Can I commune with him?" "Can I ask him questions and be answered?" Solomon in his younger life had had such experience in prayer and communion with God that he could have answered such questions

to the amazement and joy of his royal visitor. In all literature there is nothing sweeter or more beautiful than the story of that prayer of Solomon at the opening of his reign as king. He had spent the day in sacrifices and offerings to God, and in the night following God appeared to Solomon and said to him: "Ask what I shall give thee." And Solomon replied: "Thou hast showed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead. Now, O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established; for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?" And the Lord replied to Solomon and said: "Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honor, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king: wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings have had

that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like." But great as was the wisdom of Solomon, he could not have given this queen so satisfactory an answer as Christ has given to us. He has taught us, in the wonderful prayer which we call the "Lord's Prayer," how to draw near to God and know him.

Closely connected to this was another question which has not yet lost its interest, "How can I make my peace with God?" And that is a question which Christ has answered for us more perfectly than Solomon could have done. It is a question which men have been asking in every age and among all people. There have been three answers to it. The first is the answer of the heathen, who seeks to appease God by his own acts. The second is the answer of the Pharisee in Christ's story, who thanked God that he was better than other men. But Christ's answer is in the picture of the poor publican who, throwing himself on the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, cries out, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Our Bible is largely given up to the answer of this great question, "How can a man be at peace with God?" But Christ

has answered it beyond all cavil. His promise is that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Paul, speaking of Christ's answer to this question, says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Mr. Aitkin, the English missionary, tells the story of a clergyman who some years ago preached on that text in the East End of London, and at the close of his sermon he invited any who were interested in religion to come and converse with him in the vestry. He was followed by an intelligent looking man who said, "I am going to leave England in two or three days, and perhaps this is the last opportunity I shall have of talking with a clergyman. My father and I have had a terrible quarrel, and it ended in his turning me out, telling me never to darken his door again. I wandered up to London, but knew not where to look for employment. At last I found a berth as sailor before the mast, and before I go I want to ask you, "What must I do to be saved?" The minister endeavored to make the way of salvation as clear to him as he

could. They parted, however, without there being any apparent change in the young man's spiritual condition, tho he seemed to be awakened and much in earnest. Time wore on, and the incident had almost passed from the clergyman's mind, when one day a sailor called at his residence. "Do you remember," he said, "some months ago a young man coming to your vestry after the sermon you had preached on the words, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God'?"

"Oh, yes, I remember it perfectly."

"Well, he went on board the *London*, and he and I became great friends, because I am a Christian, and I soon found out that he wanted to be a Christian, too; so we used often to have long talks over our Bibles, and used to pray together; yet somehow or other I could never get him to see things quite clearly. I suppose he was looking to his feelings more than to Christ. Well, then came the shipwreck, and that young man was told off by the captain, with myself and a few others, to man one of the boats. The boat was lowered and soon was crowded; but by some accident the poor fellow was left behind in the ship. We hardly knew what to do, for our

boat was too full already. Besides, the ship was settling fast, and we were afraid of being dragged down with her. Yet we did not like to pull away. Then I heard him call me by name as he clung to the rigging; and he shouted across the water, 'Good-by, mate! If you get ashore safe, inquire for the Rev. H. B., of Limehouse Docks, London, and tell him that here in the presence of God I can say at last, "Being justified by faith, I have peace with God through my Lord Jesus Christ." ' As he said the words the ship gave her last lurch and he disappeared in a watery grave."

There is no man or woman but may find the answer to that great question, to the soul's peace, just now.

There is one other question that I am sure the Queen of Sheba asked Solomon. It is the same question that Job asked: "If a man die, shall he live again?" No man or woman, however rich or powerful or great, can ever have real peace until that question is satisfactorily settled. Human philosophy can speculate about it; but it has no comforting answer.

The story is told that Seneca, the wise philosopher of his day, was on one occasion

trying to console a woman who was suffering agonies of mind under a severe bereavement. But all he could do was to suggest to her that she had better try as soon as possible to forget her trouble. She had, he said, good examples around her in the birds and in the beasts. They, too, love their relatives, but after a momentary spasm when they lose them they take life easily again; and, said Seneca, in doing this they show man an example which he would do well to imitate. But we all know what miserable consolation such philosophy is. Mental pain can not be conjured out of a man by a philosophy which talks only of his dignity and can only make him comfortable at the cost of forgetfulness. How infinitely sweeter and more comforting are the words of Jesus to his disciples when they sit trembling in the shadow of the death of their Lord. "Let not your heart be troubled," said Jesus, "ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." How that takes the bitterness out of the thought of death and eternity! Christ is there, and he loves us, and he is fitting up a home for us; one by one our loved ones are gathered there, and some of these days we shall go home.

Henry Ward Beecher was once coming home from England. It was a very stormy trip and he was terribly seasick nearly all the way. But he was anxious to get home and was conscious all the time of exultation and joy because every hour was bringing him nearer home. The ship went into Halifax on a deep dark midnight. He could see nothing, yet the moment they came into still water he rose from his berth and got up on deck. As he sat near the smoke-stack while they were unloading the cargo, upon the wharf he saw the shadow of a person apparently going backward and forward near him. At last the thought occurred to him, "Am I watched?" Just then the person addressed him, saying, "Is this Mr. Beecher?" "It is," he replied. "I have a telegram for you from your wife." He had not until that moment realized that he had struck the continent where his home and

loved ones were. There, in the middle of the night, and in darkness, the intelligence that he had a telegram from home thrilled him through and through with exquisite joy.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are all sailing home; and by and by, when we are not thinking of it, probably, the shadowy watchman whom men call Death, at midnight it may be, will call us by name, and will say, "I have a message for you from home; God waits for you." And if we have lived at peace with God and have our hearts in touch with him, it will thrill us through and through with heavenly joy to know that at last our ship has touched the heavenly wharf and, safe from all the storms of life, we are at home.

Yet I am sure to some who hear me there is a haunting sorrow in all this, for you are conscious of your sin, and you know that if God were to call you now there could be to you no joy in the call; it could only bring you sorrow and despair. But, oh, I thank God that Paul was right when he said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And tho you may be the chief of sinners, as Paul thought he was, you may

this very hour repent of your sins and find forgiveness for them in Jesus Christ, and go to your home having peace with God.

Mr. Spurgeon once told the story of a man who had been a long while burdened in spirit. One night he dreamed he stood at the gates of heaven, longing to enter; but he dared not, and could not, for sin had shut him out. At length he saw approaching the pearly gates a company of men who came on singing, drest in white robes. So he stepped up to one of them and said, "Who are you?" And they replied, "We are the goodly fellowship of the prophets." And the poor man said, "Alas! I can not enter with you." And he watched them until they had passed the gates, and he heard outside the voice of song as they were received with welcome. Cast down and troubled, he watched until he saw another company approach, and they, too, came with music and rejoicing. He said to them, "Who are you?" And they replied, "We are the noble army of martyrs." He said, "Alas! I can not go with you." And when he heard the shouts a second time ascending within the gates, his heart was heavy within him at the thought that it was not possible for him to

enter there. Then came a third company, and he detected in the van the apostles, and after them there came mighty preachers and confessors of the Word. He said in his heart, "Alas! I can not go with you, for I am no preacher, and I have done nothing for my Master." His heart was ready to break, for they entered and were lost to his sight; and he heard the triumphant acclamation as the Master said, "Well done, enter into the joy of your Lord." But as he waited, he saw a great company approaching. Among those in front he saw Saul of Tarsus, and Mary Magdalene, and the thief who died upon the cross; and they came streaming on. So he said to one of them, "Who are you?" And the reply was, "We are a company of sinners whom no man can number, saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, through the rich, free, sovereign grace of God." And this poor man, when he heard this word, exclaimed, "Thank God, I can go with you, for I am a sinner like you, and like you I will trust in the merit of Him who died on Calvary." So he joined their ranks, and was about to enter, but he said in his heart, "When we come there will be no songs; they will admit us, but it will be

in silence, for we bring no honor to God; we have done nothing for him." But to his surprise the shouts were louder, the music more wonderful than before, and the host of heaven exclaimed, "Here are they who come to complete the number of the hosts whom Jesus bought with blood."

O my brother, my sister, will you not join that number? Bring all your sorrows, all your burdens, all your sins, all your hard questions to Christ. He alone can answer them for you and give peace to your soul.

THE CHAMBER OF IMAGERY

“Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth.”—*Ezekiel* viii. 12.

THE doom of Israel was at hand and the world knew it not. Great, strong, picturesque figures were these ancient men of Israel, and to all outward appearances loyal to God and faithful to his worship. They were as careful about their public appearances, as reverent in their demeanor, as ever; and yet the walls were crumbling over the head of Israel. The nation was ready to fall to pieces. It was rotten at the heart. That he might understand it, God called Ezekiel and sent him to dig a hole into the wall where in a secret cave an idolatrous temple was established, and there Ezekiel discovered what made his blood run cold. There he saw a great number of venerable worthies, the honored public men of the nation, worshiping the vilest idols. He found a chamber set around with idolatrous pictures

which they had borrowed from the neighboring nations. He beheld the forms of creeping things, and abominable beasts, some of which were poisonous and venomous; and yet these respected and professedly religious men were worshiping them. Not only so, but he found that each man had his own hidden chamber of imagery, where he practised this shameful secret idolatry, and in all this Ezekiel discerned the prelude to the overthrow of Israel. The strength and power of manhood in the nation was being destroyed by this hidden false worship.

Now it would be idle for us to spend time studying this hidden idolatry and shame of Israel if these ancient men were not a type of life which is very important to us, and very well known to us to-day. The fact is that every man has a hall of imagery in the secret places of his own heart, and whether we are good or bad, whether we are fitting ourselves for great triumph and glorious career or are getting ready for overthrow and destruction, depends upon what can be seen in our hall of imagery. The world sees only the outside; but in that hidden chamber where thought lives, where imagination plays, where we

revel in dreams, is the center of our soul's power. In that chamber destiny is dictated. Doctor Peabody, commenting on this Scripture, declares that no phrase could better describe the mind of man where memory is the painter than that of "a hall of imagery." In colors brighter or darker, in the very lineaments of joy or shame or grief, she paints every struggle of the soul; our very wishes and purposes, tho unacted, are all there. We behold all the scenes of the past fixt immovably on the walls and silently frowning or smiling upon us.

What is upon the wall? Some spaces are blank, telling of idle days. Some will be dark like the catacombs of Rome, having foul scenes of decay and death portrayed. Here the innocence of childhood is slowly dying, there honesty is bartered away for gain or virtue for pleasure. Each soul is a temple, each heart an altar, and often the unhallowed rites of worship other than that of the Lord of Heaven are practised.

We are apt to feel that what is done in that chamber is unmarked. We speak fondly of that which is secret, as if no one knew; but all such ideas are delusions. Darkness and thick

walls could not conceal these ancient and honored men of Israel. They said: "The Lord seeth us not." And yet Ezekiel's pick dug through the wall, and all the time God was looking upon them. In the sight of God the mind is the seat and source of all good and evil conduct. The purpose clothes the act with its own goodness, or guilt. In these secret chambers is the real life of man. There the imaginations we indulge take shape and the hopes we cherish are audible prayers before God, who sees, and who has not forsaken the earth. It is a great mistake for us to imagine that sin can do us no harm unless it becomes an act. A large oak tree was cut down in a grove, and near the heart of it was found a small nail surrounded by twenty-nine circles, showing the growth of as many years. And did that little nail injure the oak? Indeed it did; for the sap carried with it the oxide from the metal, until a space of three or four feet in length and four or five inches in diameter was completely blackened. The hidden nail in the heart proved injurious to the mighty oak so far as its higher uses were concerned; so secret sin in your heart will destroy your manhood or womanhood.

Even when it does not develop into an act it will blacken the noblest part of your nature. It will convert your soul into a macadamized road for the foulest of demons. Your moral conceptions will be obscured, your moral sensibility will be blunted, your moral appetite will be vitiated, your conscience will be impaired, and all the vitalities of your soul will be brought low. Our only safety is in refusing to harbor unclean thoughts. Chinese Gordon kept the fanatical Arabs outside of Kartoum for many weeks, but the hour they got inside his precious and glorious life was sacrificed. Keep the heart clean from evil thoughts and the life will be safe. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The secret sins committed in the chambers of imagery are as wicked in the sight of God as those which cause open disgrace in outward conduct. God sees us clearly, and understands fully all the imaginations of the heart, all the inclinations and workings of the mind. He who in his heart is a murderer, an adulterer, a thief, or the like, would certainly, if he had an opportunity, be such in his actions, too, if the one were as safe and as free from shame and danger as the other. The man who craves

for and desires these sins in his imagination wants not will to commit the wickedness with his body, for his mind is already defiled and polluted; and if in fact he does not commit the sin, it is not because he has too much conscience before God, but only care for his reputation, or fear of temporary punishment from men, or such worldly considerations.

Evil thoughts permitted to dwell in the heart oftentimes drive us farther than we think into danger of deadly sins. Perhaps no more impressive exhibition of this danger can be found in modern literature than in George Eliot's "*Mill on the Floss*." In one scene Maggie Tulliver appears in a boat on the river in company with her cousin's lover. Hour after hour passes, until twilight comes, when she awakes with a start, to find that while she has been dreaming, with her gaze fixt on the face of the man who has fascinated her, she has been taken by the stream far from home, that the river is widening and the objects on the distant banks are utterly strange to her. Her life, too, has been drifting with her thoughts. She has outraged no maxim of social rectitude. As the story proceeds it is difficult to lay the finger upon any

one incident, and to say, "Here she errs or there she oversteps the mark." And yet the reader is made to feel that she is going, and unless arrested by some shock will be lost. That drifting down the river in the twilight is made by the subtle artist a picture of the drifting of Maggie's life. The same lurking peril besets every life from the Garden of Eden until now. Beware of the stream of thought, of the current of imagination, of the eddies of revery. These dreams of life will either make or wreck your characters. You may be sure that sin dreamed of long, fondly desired and brooded over in the soul, will ultimately come out in the life; for the imaginations of the heart color in the end the outward life. Shakespeare says:

"Dangerous conceits are, in their natures, poisons,
Which, at the first, are scarce found to distaste,
But, with a little act upon the blood,
Burn like the mines of sulphur."

It is the hope of our humanity that Christ is ever seeking to redeem and cleanse this chamber of imagery. Christ is always going straight for the heart. He does not first ask about the outward life. It is always, "Give

me thy heart." John Bunyan tells us that in the doubting Man-soul Diabolus was a usurper, an interloper. The place belonged to Emmanuel; and when Jesus Christ comes to your heart, he comes to his own, to the temple that was built for him and should not have been defiled by the worship of any other. Christ is knocking at the door of every impure heart, seeking the opportunity to cleanse it of its sins and make it pure. The artist Rossetti has a picture which some of you may have seen. In the foreground is a modest oriental house, Jesus Christ sitting in its room, his face just visible through a window. Along the street in which it stands is merrily hurrying Mary Magdalene. She is arrayed in loose flowing garments and her hair hangs disheveled about her shoulders. With her is a troop of rollicking and reveling companions. The picture has all the suggestion of dissipation and complete abandonment. But, just as she is about to rush past, the woman's eye meets the eye of Christ through the window, clear as crystal and cutting as any knife. It holds her and tortures her. On her face is graven blank horror and dismay. The reckless woman is filled with self-loathing and

self-contempt. Through the gaze of Jesus the thoughts of her heart are revealed in their hideous and revolting shape. "She trembles like a guilty thing surprized." But that revelation which Christ's look gave her of the sins of her own heart is her salvation, and it leads to forgiveness. It leads to Simon's dinner-table, where she washes the feet of Jesus with her tears and wipes them with the hairs of her head. It leads to infinite happiness as she knows her sins pardoned. It leads to that morning of divine joy when on Easter Day Christ appears to her and makes her his messenger. If Christ thus looks into your heart and shows your sins to you, I pray you that you act upon the knowledge, and do not seek to shut your eyes to the solemn facts to which he calls your attention.

Lord Macaulay tells of a Hindu who was standing beside the sacred river Ganges, speaking of its virtues, when a stranger brought a microscope, and taking a drop of water placed it under the instrument. It was a remarkable revelation of uncleanness to that Hindu, but he did what some other sinners do—he simply broke the microscope. Now just as that microscope revealed the in-

fection of the sacred river, so he who looks into the eyes of Jesus blushes to behold the sins of his own heart of which he has been hitherto almost unconscious. But what folly it would be for a man to shut his eyes to his true condition, and close his ears to the Gospel message which sounds the note of warning. Better a thousand times follow Mary Magdalene's example and welcome the sight which makes him blush, and open the ear the wider to the warning and invitation which may bring salvation.

Mary Magdalene found that Christ not only had power to forgive and save, but she found in him one ready to grant to her, despite her sins, a fellowship and an association which lifted her out of the mire and pollution of her early years.

Jesus takes the sinner, no matter how terrible have been the sins of his life, into his friendship and fellowship, and fills his heart with new thoughts and new ambitions.

Mrs. Browning once asked a friend whom she admired, "What is the secret of your life? Tell me, because I wish my life to be beautiful like yours." The answer was, "I have had a friend." And so I say to you to

whom the Holy Spirit has revealed your sins, that Jesus Christ, the one altogether lovely, the most beautiful character in the universe, will, if you permit, be such a friend to you. He will walk with you, and commune with you, and live with you, and gradually the very form and image of his character will stamp itself upon you. How splendidly the apostle puts it: "We, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Mr. Meyer, the English preacher, tells of being at a certain hotel on the Continent where the guests were wearied every day because a little child would insist on playing on the only piano in the place, with one finger, one particular tune; note by note she strummed it out, and always made the same mistake in the same place. At last the guests were growing desperate, when, just as they were thinking of stopping the budding musician, a great master arrived, and, grasping the situation at a glance, sat himself with the little one, and for every note she struck with her finger he struck a ravishing chord. And even when the inevitable mistake came, he turned it into beauteous harmony. Every one

in the hotel flocked to the music room and stood silent and subdued; and the tune was played, not once or twice, but again and again, and when the little child's confidence had grown, the musician arose, and, taking her by the hand, led her round the company and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, thank the musician to whom you are indebted for this entertainment which you have had to-day." Every one bowed to the child, knowing well what they owed to the master. So we are beating out life's music, fitfully, feebly, tremblingly, sinfully; but there is not one of us here so poor in grace, so sinful in heart, who has any desire at all to render the spiritual harmony, who need meet failure if he will but make the attempt to follow Jesus Christ and to do his best under the eye and in the presence of his Savior. Christ is the expert musician of the human heart. He is able to dissolve all our imperfections and make glorious a life which has been sin-stained and which without him could only give forth discord. Let us bring all our hearts to him, and our chamber of imagery, which aforetime had only evil pictures to make us blush, shall be filled with visions the most beautiful that the human heart can hold.

A REPENTANCE WHICH CAME TOO LATE

“And Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the Lord, and caught hold on the horns of the altar.”—*I Kings* ii. 28.

JOAB was a soldier. He was a man of might and power. In many ways he was the most potent man of his time. He was brave, resourceful, and patiently persistent. He was one of the men who could bide his time. If an Absalom set his barley-fields on fire, he could shut his anger down under the hatches and keep it smoldering there for years until some day when that gay young politician should be hanging by his curls in the forest, a fair target for his dart. Joab never forgot, and he never forgave. He was a man of strength, and a successful leader of armies. On the occasion of the conquest of the city of Jerusalem he was appointed by David to lead the army, and he displayed such bravery and such splendid gifts of leadership that he remained at the head of the armies of David for more than thirty years. His position in the kingdom was second only to David. He was rich, and of tremendous influence and prestige

among the people; but he was not a good man. Joab had had unusual opportunities to become an intelligently religious man. Altho a soldier, and a leader of armies, not even Havelock, England's soldier saint, nor Howard, our American Christian general, had a better opportunity to receive religious influence. He associated for three decades with King David, the author of those wonderful Psalms, and a man who, with all his follies and sins, was deeply religious. He was David's counselor. He knew all that was in David's heart. No man could know David so intimately without being convinced of the intense sincerity of the man and his true faith in God. Undoubtedly he often attended David in the worship of the sanctuary; but it had no influence on Joab. For thirty years he lived close to David, knew of all the interposition of God's providence in behalf of his people, and yet his heart continued to grow hard and stubborn and cruel. His spirit became more vindictive as age crept on him. He became more revengeful, and having the power, he used it for his own advancement. He lived a godless life despite godly examples and influences all around him.

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David is now an old man, about to die, and Joab has grown old along with David; and yet with David on his death-bed, he engages with Adonijah in a wicked rebellion against the king. David hears of it, and turns the matter over to Solomon, the son who is to be king in his place, with these words: "Thou knowest what Joab did to me, how he shed the blood of war in peace. . . . Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace." And when the plot against Solomon went awry, and when the news came to grey-haired old General Joab that his protégé Adonijah was put to death, and Abiathar, the priest, had gone into exile, his conscience told him that his own ruin was hard on his track. He fled to Gibeon, and concealed himself for protection in the tabernacle of the Lord, and caught hold on the horns of the altar. But it did not save him, for Benaiah, one of David's faithful friends, pursued him even to the altar, and slew him there, and he was buried at his own camp in the wilderness.

There are some important and interesting lessons we may learn from this tragic story.

First: A man may have the most religious

surroundings, and the very best of friends, and yet remain godless and without religion himself. We were speaking but now of Joab's opportunities. No man can read the Psalms of David without feeling that it must have been a gracious privilege to have unlimited opportunity for conversation with that poetic and worshipful soul. Yet it all failed on Joab, and such influences have failed on many another man. Lot was brought up in the tent of Abraham, the most godly man of his day, one of the most unselfish and devotedly religious men the world has ever seen. Abraham was known throughout the entire East as "the friend of God," and yet, notwithstanding all that, Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom. Judas associated with Jesus Christ, and listened to all his sermons and conversations, and witnessed all his miracles for three years, and then betrayed his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. Religious associations are not enough; a man may have all these, and they may only harden his heart. If I speak to anyone who has been blest with a Christian father and mother and has been surrounded by a circle of Christian friends for years, and yet it has not influenced you to become a

Christian, I pray God to arouse you to a proper sense of your danger. These very facts show that religious associations are hardening rather than helping you. Christianity must take hold of your own heart, and fertilize your own soul, if it is to be of any real value to you.

Second: Conscience will turn the bravest man into a coward. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth." No man pursued Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In all the fragrant bowers of Paradise, with its flowers and fruits, there was no visible enemy, and yet Adam and Eve fled, and sought to hide themselves from God, and when God called Adam by name he answered, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid." He was afraid because he had sinned against God and his conscience had spoken in rebuke and warning. After Cain had slain Abel he fled, tho no one was pursuing. Conscience followed him, and a man who has his conscience after him does not require any other detective to keep track. No man pursued Judas. He had made his bargain and got his money, and no one sought to trouble him. But conscience drove him back to the men who had bribed

him to betray his Lord, and conscience made him throw the blood-stained silver down on the floor at their feet. And it was conscience that drove him to the death of the suicide. So it was with Joab, when the news came that Adonijah was destroyed. There was not a word in it all about himself, but his conscience warned him that he was the chief sinner in the conspiracy and that vengeance would soon be on his track, and so he fled. And, strange to behold, he fled to the church. He fled to the altar of God. He would not go there while he was well and strong, in his youthful glory. He never worshiped at God's altar while he was in the height of his power and the splendor of his influence. But now, when he is old, and in disgrace, hunted, pursued by his conscience, tracked down by his sins, he hurries to God's altar and flings his arms about it. Why? Because his soul is full of sorrow that he has grieved his heavenly Father and that he has hardened his heart against God's mercy? No, he is sorry that his plot has failed. He grieves that he has been caught in his own trap, and he uses God's altar in an attempt to escape from the just punishment for his sins. Repentance, to avail, must go deeper than that.

Third: Repentance may come too late. Joab's repentance was too late. He had gone too far. He had sinned away his day of grace. There is a line on the side of the vessel beyond which, if it careen but a hairbreadth, the ship will capsize. And so there is a point in a man's life, God only knows where it is, beyond which if he goes he becomes like Ephraim, joined unto his idols, or like Esau, who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage and afterward could not reclaim it, tho he sought for a place of repentance with tears. There could be no more solemn question for consideration. A soul, sinning away its day of opportunity and mercy, and knocking at last at the closed gate, and finding no admission. Tennyson never wrote sadder words or more powerful than those he puts on the lips of the sinning queen in "The Idyls of the King":

"'Late, late, so late! And dark the night and chill!
Late, late, so late! But we can enter still.'
'Too late, too late! Ye can not enter now.'

"'No light had we; for that we do repent,
And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.'
'Too late, too late! Ye can not enter now.'

“ ‘No light! so late! And dark and chill the night!
O let us in, that we may find the light!’
‘Too late, too late! Ye can not enter now.’

“ ‘Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?
O let us in, tho late, to kiss his feet!’
‘No, no, too late! Ye can not enter now.’ ”

LIFE'S EASIEST YOKE

“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.”—*I John v. 3.*

THERE is an impression abroad among some people that Christ imposes upon his disciples a yoke of commandments and restrictions which are very heavy to be borne, and this impression is deepened by the fact that profess Christians sometimes talk about the things necessary for them to give up in order to maintain a consistent Christian character in the community in such a way that it would appear as if they were carrying a pretty heavy burden and were bearing a yoke that chafed their shoulders. In the face of this impression, we have this Scripture declaration that the commandments of Christ are not grievous. Which is true?—this rumor abroad, or the divine Word? It is easy for us to investigate, for all the commandments of Christ are open and above board. Some are keeping

them, and their lives and experiences are known to us, while, on the other hand, there are many who refuse his commandments, and do not keep them. Who are living the happiest lives?

One of the first commandments, or series of commandments, which comes to every man or woman at the doorway of the Christian life is the Christian prohibition in regard to the lusts and passions and appetites of the flesh. Christ demands of us that we shall deny ourselves everything that will interfere with our sobriety and our purity, and follow him. The Scripture abounds in warnings along this line, and it is right here, perhaps, that men and women are inclined to complain that the commandments of Jesus are grievous. A young man is in a gay and giddy circle, much given to reveling and the enjoyments of the delights of the table. He himself is full of the hot blood of youth, and his strong, vital, physical nature responds readily to the fascination of wine and what is known as high living. He likes these gay and giddy people. He enjoys the sensations that come when the flush of the tempting drink is on his cheek; he rejoices in the gay repartee and the wild

abandon of such assemblies. But Christ stands in the midst of all this with a warning look, commanding him to look not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup; to not be among wine-bibbers nor riotous eaters of flesh; but to live soberly; and in many other words urges a life of self-denial as to the appetites of the flesh.

There is no doubt that to thrust these things aside after once the lips have tasted of them requires great determination and sincere self-denial. But is that commandment grievous? That depends on whether in the long run it gives more happiness than does self-indulgence.

Nearly a score of years ago I knew two men who were neighbors in a certain city. They were both bright, amiable, well-to-do men. They had education, inherited manhood, and traditions of the noblest type. Both of these men were peculiarly susceptible to the temptations in the realm of the appetites. They had each come to yield in a moderate way to the fascinations of the wine glass. At the time I first knew them, I regarded them as in great danger of overthrow. A certain

set of circumstances led one of these men to become a pronounced Christian, and becoming so, he became a total abstainer, and cut off entirely the old habits of self-indulgence. The years have passed away; his children have grown to manhood and to womanhood in great honor. The man himself has increased in honor and reputation all the while. Every year has seen him a larger, stronger, nobler, more gracious personality. His life has been like a lighthouse that has made it safer and better for many other men. The other man was brought under the same influences that wrought the great transformation in his friend. But he told his friend at the time that he thought Christianity demanded too much of a man; its restrictions were too heavy, and he could not afford to give up all the pleasant indulgences to which he had been accustomed in order to be a Christian. He thought the yoke of Jesus was grievous. What has been the result? The years have passed over his head. Little by little the reins of self-restraint were loosened in his grip. The will-power by which for a long time he held his passions in leash was gradually deteriorated until at last, as men say, "He went to

pieces." In his own personal character and make-up he cheapened and coarsened by self-indulgence until he lost his keen sense of honor in relation to his wife and children. No one but God knows the anguish his wife suffered. No one can tell the mortification and the shame suffered by his children. At last a self-respecting woman could no longer endure the indignity put upon her, and now he is separated from his wife and is supported by his children in a sanitarium, a poor old wreck, stranded at middle age. A wreck of self-indulgence.

That is a fair test. Fifteen years ago the men stood side by side. The wisest judge looking on would have said they stood even in the race. But it is a far cry between them now. Surely the Christian man has not found the commandments of Christ grievous.

Second, there is a series of commandments and restrictions in regard to love and forgiveness. Christ commands not only that we shall love men generally, but that we shall love our enemies, and shall pray for them that use us despitefully. Furthermore, he puts it at the very foundation of all prayer, and all exercise of the Christian religion, in the prayer which

he himself teaches us, that we shall ask to be forgiven our own sins only as we forgive those who have sinned against us.

Many people who have become Christians have had a very hard struggle at this point, and some of you may feel that these are very hard provisions. You feel that you have been wronged, someone has treated you very badly, and the iron has entered into your soul, and you are ready to cry out that to love them, to forgive them, to pray for them, and to seek only their good is a grievous commandment. Well, it is not grievous unless the opposite would be easier. If to refuse to love and to forgive will bring you more happiness than to follow the command of Jesus, then you have a right to say that this commandment is grievous, but not otherwise. How is it? There are plenty of illustrations. You can find Christian communities all over the country where there are churches and schools surrounded by Christian farming settlements whose citizens practise love and forgiveness and kindness, where year after year there is no bloodshed, no tragedy. And you can go into other communities where hate and vengeance are allowed to fester in the hearts of

the people, where family and neighborhood feuds run riot, and there murder is an ordinary every-day experience. Surely Christ's yoke is not grievous to these Christian neighborhoods.

I know that when a man is smarting under a fresh sense of wrong it is hard not to take judgment into his own hands, and if he can not do that, hard not to cherish a feeling of hatred and a desire to get revenge. But all observation and history show us that there is nothing which so embitters the fountains of a generous nature as a cherished hatred. It poisons life at the very spring. Not only so, but it gets worse as time passes, and that which was only an ordinary ill will at first, soon comes to be a deep and blinding hate, and hate, when it has festered a little, always wants to kill. We had an illustration not long ago in New York City. Two brothers,—one of them a distinguished writer. The other, through self-indulgence, had lost the good will of their father and had been practically disinherited. He felt great displeasure toward his brother, whom he regarded as a creature of good fortune at his expense. Now, there were two ways open to him, one to forgive his

brother, put the hatred out of his heart, saying, "I will not lose my brother as well as my fortune." The other was the path that sinful human nature always finds easy to take, the path of hatred and revenge. He took that path, and as time passed his hatred became more intense, until after a while he thought his brother was the source of all his troubles. At last his revengeful feelings mastered him completely, and he went to his brother's house and murdered him in cold blood and then took his own life. And the two brothers, the murdered one and the suicide, were buried in the same grave. Do you think the commandment of Jesus Christ, that would have turned that man on the path of love and forgiveness rather than to the grave of the murderer and the suicide, was grievous? No, indeed; his commandments are not grievous.

Third, there is another series of commandments concerning the bearing of burdens and sharing the difficulties of others. Christ demands that we shall love our neighbor as ourselves, that we shall bear one another's burdens, that we shall not look on our own things only, but on the things of others, seeking their good equally with our own.

All the selfishness of human nature rises up against this, and men often feel that the command to bear the burdens of the weak is a hard handicap to put on an ambitious young worker. But is this commandment grievous? Are the men and women happier who look after number one, who think only of themselves and shut up their hearts against the weak and the feeble? That is the way you must settle it, by an appeal to the facts; and I am sure that the moment you do that you are ready to confess judgment on the case. Who have been the happiest people in history, people who have been the most successful, whose lives have been bubbling over like great springs of joy? Have they not been men and women who carried burdens like their divine Lord? John Wesley, preaching, and giving, and spending himself with marvelous prodigality after he was eighty years of age, is described by men and women who saw him as the happiest of men. John Howard, traveling in the old days when travel was hardship, going down into foul dungeons, giving his life to ameliorate the conditions of the prisoners of Europe who had no other voice to speak for them, was a man of infinite enthusiasm and

joy. And the story is the same everywhere. Dorothea Dix, fighting her long battle for the insane; Florence Nightingale, battering down the doors of locked-up provision stores for the wounded soldiers in the Crimea; Frances Willard, pouring out her life like a libation to God in her leading of the forlorn hope for temperance; go search anywhere and everywhere among the names known among the nations, or in individual towns and little communities wherever man or woman or child has bent the shoulder to carry the burdens of another, God has not failed to give the happiness that can come only from heavenly sources. Not among the misers, not among the selfish and self-indulgent, not among the people that have closed their hearts on the world and like huge sponges have clutched everything for themselves can you find the rich and happy and joyous hearts, the glad and evergreen lives that never grow old. No, not there; but among the unselfish, among the generous, among the loving, among those who have opened their hearts to the people about them and given the best they had to their weaker neighbor. There you will find the happiest people in the world.

Some of you ought to enlist now under Christ's banner of love. Love is the fulfilling of the law, and so I appeal to you that, turning away from wicked passions and selfish lusts and every kind of hate and revenge, you give your heart to Christ in a complete surrender of love.

THE LEOPARD'S SPOTS

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."—*Jer.* xiii. 23.

THIS striking and oft-quoted Scripture is a graphic description and illustration of the tenacity of evil habit. The skin of the Ethiopian is a part of the very fiber of his body. There is no medicine, no fuller's compound that can change his color. The leopard's spots are part of its nature. It can not put off its coat at will and assume that of the lion or the tiger. It is a leopard, and tho you shaved it every day for a year, when its hair grew out again it would be covered with spots. And these are the illustrations which Jeremiah, who was a great preacher of righteousness, uses to picture his thought about the danger of allowing ourselves to fall into the habit of doing evil. A man who thinks and does the same things over and over again, day after day, and year after year, is in danger of becoming simply an automatic machine. The danger is that the thoughts will

become cramped and prejudices will spring up against everything outside of the rut in which he lives. If continued long enough these prejudices become so strong that it seems impossible to eradicate them. This is one of the great dangers to the sinner. The wicked habit is a rut which gets deeper and deeper every time the wrong deed is performed. So important is this danger that it is wise for us to recall some of the reasons which make it unlikely that a man who has become accustomed to doing evil will change to righteousness.

First: Sinful habits become strengthened with every indulgence, and every unsuccessful attempt to break away from an evil to which we have once yielded strengthens the habit upon us. We all know how much easier it is to break a child permanently away from any habit or custom than it is a grown man or woman. The man or the woman has more intelligence and can reason better about the matter than the child, and at first glance you would say that it would be easier to deal with the mature mind than with the younger; but the difference lies in the fact that the child has not long continued in the evil practise,

while with the adult the habit has strengthened until it has become a part of the nature itself. It is easy to take a young tree and train it into almost any conceivable shape. It is because it bends easily. It has not become stiffened in its own purpose to grow in a certain way. So to speak, it has not attained its definite habit or character; but after the tree has grown into maturity you can not do much with it. It will break before it will bend very much. So it is that evil habits strengthen themselves by indulgence to such an extent that it is almost impossible to escape from them.

We are told that in South Africa there is a curious plant known as a hook-thorn or grapple-plant, said to bear some resemblance to the cuttlefish. The large flowers are of a lovely purple hue and spread themselves over the ground or hang in masses from the trees and shrubs. The long branches have sharp, barbed thorns, set in pairs throughout their length. When the petals fall off and the seed-vessels are developed and fully ripe the two sides separate widely from each other and form an array of sharp-curved hooks. Wo to the traveler who ventures near at such a

time! In one of the Kaffir wars with England the English soldiers suffered terribly from this plant. While the Kaffir, unclothed and oily, escaped harm, the European was certain to be made and held a prisoner. If one hooked thorn caught a coat-sleeve the first movement at escape would bend the long slender branches and hook after hook would fix its point into the clothing. Struggling only multiplied the number of thorned enemies, and there was no way of escape except to stand still, cut off the clinging seed-vessels, and remove them one by one. Many a luckless soldier was run to death by a Kaffir's spear while thus trying to free himself. This is a vivid illustration of the dangerous power of evil habit which through custom and long self-indulgence hooks into a man's very heart and holds him against his reason and against his will a prisoner even to his death.

Second: One of the greatest dangers in the formation of evil habit is that the man who is drawn away into sin will not appreciate the deadly seriousness of his situation until the habit has become a most important factor in his whole scheme of life. Coleridge calls attention to the fact that centers or center-

pieces of wood are put by builders under an arch of stone while it is in process of construction, till the keystone is put in. Just such is the use that Satan makes of pleasure. The pleasure lasts, perhaps, till the habit is fully formed; but, that done, the structure may stand eternal. All the pleasure and fascination that appeared at first in the sin, disappears, and only the vice-like grip of a wicked habit remains. As the poet says: "The pleasures are sent for fire-wood and a hell burns in this life." And the Scriptures assure us that it will continue to burn not only in this life but throughout the eternal career of the sinner. Beware of the pleasures of sin that are deluding you and leading you into a habit that may fasten upon you with a grip like the skin of the Ethiopian or the spots on the robe of the leopard.

Third: There is immense significance in the fact that the oftener a sin is indulged the less wrong and wicked it appears to the sinner. This makes it improbable that a man will give up his sin. No thoughtful person can dispute this fact. No one who has been brought up to admire and practise righteousness and to be restrained from wickedness

ever enters easily into sin. The first time a sin is yielded to it is with fear and trembling. The conscience receives a great shock. The rebuke that comes afterward is stinging and terrible. Happy the man who listens to the rebuke, as David did to the accusation of Nathan, and repents of his sin, and finding forgiveness of God, begins anew a life of righteousness. But if, on the other hand, the sinner continues to indulge himself in the sin, no matter what it is, no matter what the passion or appetite is that he has indulged, as time goes on he will come after a while to sin almost without noticing it. It will seem to be a small matter to him. By some strange deception of Satan a man is changed, or, rather, he is blinded in his intellectual and spiritual conception, until he comes, after a while, to the dangerous and terrible condition of the man who calls good evil and evil good. This danger is insidious, but it is desperately real. You may so often violate the warnings of conscience as to deaden it until you lose nearly all sense of sin and the danger arising from it. And thus you may lull yourself to sleep on the very edge of the precipice; for, remember, sin is none the less dangerous because a man has drugged his conscience.

A distinguished preacher has said that the principal reason why people are commonly less affected with sins of the heart than those of an open nature is because of this silencing of conscience by oft-indulgence. There are people who have given themselves over for a long time to hatred and malice against those who they imagine have wronged them, and yet their consciences may be quiet. These same people would receive immediate rebukes and warnings from the conscience if they should really and actually take away the life of the man or the woman concerning whom they have indulged themselves in hate. And yet the words of God's truth teach us as clearly as they teach anything that "he who hateth his brother is a murderer." Are there not those who entertain irreverent and blasphemous thoughts of God who would be surprised and shocked if they were to utter these feelings in words? The reason why conscience is alarmed in the one case and not in the other is that the man or the woman whose heart is full of hate and lust for vengeance has become accustomed to do evil in that respect and has long yielded to the habit, while never yet having cut a throat or stuck a dagger into the heart in actual murder.

All this shows us that the tendency of sin is to stupefy, to blunt and make dull our moral senses so that we do not retain a clear perception of our true condition. Every day a man lives in sin of the heart or life it therefore becomes the less likely that there will ever be any change that will turn him to righteousness, and bring about in his character a transformation which will lead him to heaven at last in the Christian image and likeness.

Fourth: Another very important fact bearing on this theme is that every time a sinner hears the message of mercy and salvation through Jesus Christ, and rejects it, he deadens his sensibilities to it, and it loses its influence over his mind and heart. The human mind is so constituted that whatever is novel to us, which comes to us new and unexpected, will receive the greatest attention on our part. There are many facts which, the first time you heard them, interested you very much, aroused all your faculties to action, awakened every sense to alertness; but having heard them repeated over and over again you have at last come to have no interest in them. In some respects that is true

concerning the message of the Gospel. The old preachers among the circuit riders on the frontier used to have a phrase which expressed this condition. I have often heard them speak about certain people as being "Gospel-hardened." They intended to convey by such that it was possible for people to hear the good news of salvation so often repeated, to be moved by it in their feelings so many times without rising up to decision and action, that at last the conscience became seared; the emotions became heavy and unresponsive, and they would hear the story of the divine love which caused Christ to give his life upon the cross as a ransom for their sins, and yet listen to it with indifference, and it would have no power to awaken their hearts. Their hearts were hardened against the Gospel. If that be the condition of any who hear me, I wish to urge upon you the importance of giving full credit to your danger. It is indeed hard to exaggerate the danger of final disaster and ruin to a man or a woman who has long heard the Gospel and been often awakened and aroused, but has dropt into the habit of rejecting Christ and his mercy.

There can be no greater question for you to ask yourself than that which the writer of Hebrews urges upon others, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

But I must not close without a word of hope to any who may despair of their own power to make this great change from sin to righteousness. It is not for us to attempt it in our own strength. The drunkard may be held in a fiendish grapple far beyond his own power to break. Lust may have seriously eaten into the very citadel of a man's heart until it has intertwined the most beautiful affections with the most lawless passions, until he is held in a grip that would seem to rend life asunder to break. But no matter what the sad condition, nor how seemingly hopeless the conditions into which sinful habit has brought you, I come to you with the glorious Gospel of the Son of God and with the assurance that if you will open your heart to Christ and seek his help he will set you free. By the aid of Jesus Christ the spiritual Ethiopian can change his skin and the sinning leopard change his spots. The sinner

may become holy and pure, the bondman to evil may become the servant of righteousness, and he who has wallowed in evil thoughts may become the friend and brother and trusted servant of Jesus Christ.

THE SCALES IN WHICH THOUGHTS ARE WEIGHED

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report . . . think on these things.”—*Phil.* iv. 8 (Am. Rev.).

You can not weigh all substances in the same kind of scales. You would not weigh a load of hay on gold scales nor would you weigh a bag of gold-dust according to avoirdupois standard. There are huge scales on which railroad cars are weighed, where a matter of ten, twenty, or fifty pounds of variance would not be considered a serious matter; but there are scales on which precious stones are weighed that will flutter at the fall of a baby's silken hair.

There are other scales, still finer and more important. These are the scales on which thoughts are weighed. They are the scales of God. Daniel said to the doomed king of Babylon, “Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.” The king's deeds

were evil, but back of the evil deeds were the evil thoughts which produced them.

In our text Paul gives us the standards of weight which are used upon these scales of God. It is infinitely important that we should study them with the greatest earnestness, since it is by these standards that our own thoughts are constantly weighed.

The first standard Paul gives is *truth*—“Whatsoever things are true.” God is absolutely true, and he measures our thoughts, first of all, by truth. The first effect of faith in God and of reverence toward God is to make men more truthful. A belief in a personal God who is always true to himself and to his creatures and who holds them responsible to him for genuineness and sincerity is the mightiest force for truth that there is among men. An incident is related of a French politician, Renaud, who had been elected to the French Senate. When he reached Paris from his home in the Pyrenees he engaged a room in a leading hotel and paid a month’s rent, one hundred and fifty francs, in advance. The proprietor asked him if he would have a receipt. “It is not necessary,” replied Renaud; “God has witnessed the payment.”

"Do you believe in God?" sneered the host.

"Most assuredly," said the senator.

"Don't you?"

"Not I, monsieur," declared the host.

"Ah!" said Renaud; "in that case please give me a receipt."

The senator showed sound sense, which was doubtless the result of long experience, which had proved to him that reverent faith in God was the surest foundation of truthfulness in man.

Devotion to truth in our thoughts is all that gives steadiness and certainty in the direction of our life course. The late Professor Huxley was once on his way to a meeting of the British Association held in Dublin. The train was late, and the professor, leaping into a jaunting car, called out to the driver: "Drive fast." Away they went at a tremendous rate, jolting over the streets, until Huxley inquired: "Do you know where we are going?"

"No," said the driver. "I don't know where we are going, but I know we are going fast."

Men who are living without God and without the heavenly compass are like that driver. They may be full of energy, full of exertion,

whirling through life at a tremendous pace, and yet going nowhere. It is only as the end of our thinking, like Jacob's ladder, reaches from the earth up to God that the energy and effort of our lives are so guided by our thought that Truth is at the helm, and, however fast we may be driving, we are sure whither we are going.

The next standard of weight on these thought-scales is that of true honor: "Whatsoever things are honorable." That word "honorable" really means more than we are accustomed to give to the word "honest," or "honorable," in our common speech. It means "reverent," something that compels by its very greatness our respect, and if you apply it to our thoughts it must signify reverent thinking on our part. It suggests elevated thinking, the mind lifted up to the consideration of things that are worth while. John Richard Green, the distinguished author of the "History of the English People," had on one occasion the coveted opportunity of spending the evening with Gladstone. He went away to say of him and of his conversation: "I felt proud of my leader, because he was so noble of soul." That was a glorious

thing to be able to say about a man. And the thing you need to ask about yourself in regard to your thinking is whether you grovel in the mud like a mole or fly in the face of the sun like the eagle. Are your thoughts reverent and high, or are they irreverent and mean? All profanity is born of irreverent thinking. A man's thoughts are low and reckless and irreverent, and so he swears. All high flights of poetry, all noble and ideal utterances in prose, all lofty and glorious schemes for helping humanity are born of musing on "whatsoever things are honorable." If you want to give yourself a chance for the noblest career, then let your mind go out in what Shakespeare calls, "sky-aspiring and ambitious thoughts," in search of noblest service for God and your fellow man.

- Another standard given us by Paul is that of justice in our thinking. Our thoughts are to be weighed by this rule, "Whatsoever things are just." First of all, if we are to be just in our thinking about men we must be just in our thoughts of God and of his providential government over us and over the world. There are many besides Job who have had cause to repent unjust thoughts

about God. Job says: "Oh that my vexation were but weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! for now it would be heavier than the sand of the seas: therefore have my words been rash." Let us beware of rash thinking toward God. Then we shall save ourselves from rash acting and dangerous words. The man who is just toward God in his thoughts is likely to be just in his thoughts about his fellow men. And if we are just toward them it will save us from a thousand ills and make our lives exceedingly helpful to others. Just thinking on our part will often awaken just thinking on the part of others.

Carroll D. Wright tells the story of a great manufacturer employing an army of men who found during a deprest period that it was absolutely necessary to reduce wages ten per cent. A committee from the Labor Union called upon him in his office, demanding the restoration of the former rate of wages. He said, "That is all right. You have just as good a right to come to me and ask for an increase in your wages, and if you can not get it to know the reason why you can not, as my stockholders have to come into my count-

ing-room and ask for increased dividends, and if they can not get them to know the reason why they can not. You invest your work; the stockholders invest their capital. Come ahead, therefore, to the counting-room. Bring your experts there, and they shall have our books for examination; and if they find we can restore this ten per cent., we will do it, and do it immediately, no matter what it costs us." "Well," the men said, "that's fair." They accepted his proposition, employed some experts, and these presented their report at the end of three weeks. Then the committee came to the manufacturer again, and said: "Mr. President, we have come back to say to you that we not only withdraw our request for the restoration of the ten per cent. in our wages, but we unanimously recommend a further reduction." This man had shown his employees the justice of his own thoughts and conduct toward them, and it awakened like judgment on their part.

Another rule by which Paul declares thoughts are to be weighed is the rule of purity. "Whatsoever things are pure."

Mr. Meyer says that thoughts lay down the tram-lines upon which presently the power of

action proceeds; that thoughts set up the wires along which the message flashes; so if a man cherishes impure thoughts his nature runs down; it deteriorates; it is permeated with a sort of dry rot, and no force of will, however powerful, can help it. In his letter to the Romans Paul sets forth in graphic and awful language the evolution of evil in human life, and he declares that it was because men refused to retain God in their minds, and cherished impure and wicked thoughts, that they became abandoned to vile passions which destroyed them. Keep your thinking pure and your life will take care of itself; but cherish impure thoughts and they will soon threaten your very life.

An English officer in India, who had captured a tiger's cub and brought it up as a pet, was one day sleeping in his tent when the young tiger began playfully to lap his master's hand with his tongue. For a time the officer slept on, unconscious of peril; finally he awoke with a start, to find that the rough surface of the tiger's tongue had torn the skin and that the animal was fiercely gloating over its first taste of blood, with blazing eyes, and lashing tail. In another moment it would

have buried its fangs in its master's flesh; but the officer cautiously stretched out his free hand and drew his revolver from the holster that was lying near by, and shot his transformed pet through the brain. He hated to do it, but at a glance he saw that he never would be safe for an instant again, now that its ferocity was aroused. An impure thought cherished in the heart and mind is like that tiger cub. No man is safe whose thoughts are not pure. We can pray no greater prayer than that the thoughts of our hearts shall be cleansed and that our minds may be given over to clean, pure, wholesome thoughts.

Here is another beautiful rule observed among the standards for weighing thoughts, and that is beauty and loveliness. "Whatever things are lovely." It is strange that we should allow our minds to run on so many unlovely things when there are so many lovely things to think about. It is true, however, that the loveliest thinking we do must oft-times contemplate the unlovely, because we are seeking to change it into the beautiful. If a man have a piece of swamp land on his estate he may devote more thought to it than to any other part for a time, for he is planning

and working to drain it and cleanse it and make it beautiful. Such thoughts are always lovely because the picture of the improvement is ever in the mind. So it is with our thoughts which go out after others in seeking to help them. Such thoughts are the most lovely that can come to us, because they are ever holding up before us the joy and the blessing which come to those for whom we plan and labor. That seems to me to be in the spirit of this rule of the thought scales. It must mean that everything we do we should seek to do in the most lovely way.

There are some men and women who are as careful to think out a beautiful way of doing a thing as that the thing itself shall be beautiful and good. Such people are always a benediction to the world. The late George W. Childs was that kind of a man. He not only thought noble and glorious things to do for the world, but he invented lovely ways of doing them.

One year a hard-working young art student won a prize at the Academy which entitled her to a year's study in Paris. Mr. Childs sent for the young girl and when she came said to her: "I have been inquiring about you, and

find that you are the only child of your mother, and she a widow. I have just sent her a check which will give her a year in Paris, too. Too many pretty art students over there already, trotting up and down the Latin Quarter alone. Your mother goes with you. That's all. Good day."

As Walt Whitman, the poet, grew old, he was very poor, and Mr. Childs not only wanted the old man to grow old comfortably, but also without loss of self-respect. He used to hire the poet on all sorts of errands of mercy, having two ends in view—the one the support of the poet and the other the seeking out desirable opportunities for service. One autumn he paid Mr. Whitman a regular salary for riding on all the horse-cars in the city, to find out how many of the drivers had overcoats for the winter, and report to him, so that he might provide for the needy. Whitman was once asked if this story were true. "Yes," he said, "I did not refuse the job. It was not hard work. He paid me a good salary, and then I had the satisfaction of knowing that I was helping Childs out of his difficulty."

Now it is easy to say that he was a rich

man, and it was possible for him to take the time to be lovely in his doing. But to say that, or to think it, is to violate the rules we have already discust which require us to be true and just in our thoughts. There is just as much necessity for thinking thoughts that are lovely, and devising lovely ways of saying and doing things when our circumstances are narrowly limited, as among the rich. And it is just as possible to think lovely thoughts, and as important to devise lovely ways of living in an apartment of five rooms as in a mansion. In short, to be lovely in our thinking and doing is simply to give ourselves over to the spirit of love; and in a cottage or a mansion love is the divine elixir of life. It is the supreme oil which soothes all waters.

There is one other standard of measurement, and that requires that we shall think on "Whatsoever things are of good report." That must indicate that we are to take counsel of our faith and confidence in God and in goodness rather than of our cowardice. When the spies went out into the Promised Land, ten of them came back with a bad report. The pastures and the fields and the orchards were all right, but the giants were huge and

dangerous, and therefore they gave a bad report. Joshua and Caleb, only, brought in a good report. They, too, had seen the giants and the walled cities, but they had looked out upon them through eyes that had looked upon the promises of God. They believed God's word was true, and that he would stand by them and give them victory, and so they brought in a good report. According to the author of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews their good report came "by faith." Now the right kind of thinking on the part of Moses and his people would have been to accept the good report of the two courageous and faithful men.

This brings down the last rule of thought-weight to this: We are to consider the bright side of life. We are not to overlook the giants, but God's promise is always to look larger to us than the giants. Then from every day's observation we shall be able to bring a good report, since no threat of evil shall be so manifest to us as the mercies of God.

If our thoughts are so in harmony with God's that they pass muster on these scales, life on earth will be sweet and life in heaven glorious.

William Blake, the poet and painter, lived a singularly pure and happy life. It was full of discouragement and greatly cramped by poverty, but of this he seemed to take no account. His mind was always filled with lofty and beautiful thoughts, and this world seemed to him but the entrance to a nobler state of existence.

One day, when he was an old man, a little girl was brought to him. He looked at her tenderly, stroked her long curls, and said: "My child, may God make this world as beautiful to you as it has been to me."

He had not been well for a long time before his death. When his old friend, the artist Flaxman, died, Blake said: "I thought I should go first. I can not think of death as more than going out of one room into another."

A little more than a year after that he died. On the day of his death he composed and uttered songs in praise of God so glorious that his wife, as she stood by, was enraptured by them.

"My beloved," he said to her, "they are not mine. No, they are not mine!"

And with that sweet faith he fell on sleep.

Of him it could have been said as Longfellow wrote of Bayard Taylor:

“Dead he lay among his books!
The Peace of God was in his looks.”

Or the still simpler words which tell of the triumph of Enoch: “He was not, for God took him.” May it be fitting at the eventide that such words shall be spoken concerning each of us ’

THE MASTER CLOCK

“Until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”—*II Peter* i. 19.

WHEN Emerson said, “Hitch your wagon to a star,” he was not saying anything unscientific or un-Scriptural. In these days multiplied thousands of people every day set their watches by a star, all unconscious that they are thus guided. In the great observatories men are all the time keeping track of the watches and clocks of the people. It is a very simple matter. All they need to do is to set one great central clock by any one of the six hundred fixt stars which have been watched so many centuries by the astronomers. They are found to be always reliable and can be depended upon to give the correct time of day.

In the Naval Observatory at Georgetown Heights, Washington, there is a great clock which is called the “Master Clock.” By means of very delicate machinery the time is repeated from this clock, over eighteen different circuits, to many parts of the country. New

York City repeats the time to all points east and north; Chicago and Cincinnati repeat to all points west and southwest; Richmond, Augusta, and Atlanta to all points south. If you are in a large telegraph office at the moment the time signal is being sent out, you will see the operators at their keys take out their watches a few seconds before the time is due, open them, put a tiny piece of tissue-paper twisted into a thread between the spokes of one of the little wheels in their watches, thus holding back the movement to the instant the signal is given and then releasing the wheel so that the watch falls into the exact beat of the Master Clock in Washington.

Time-balls have been invented to convey the information to the people in a picturesque and available way. A round ball, large enough to be seen from the street, supported by its appliances, rests on the top of some building. It is attached by wire to the circuit from Washington in such a manner that at the instant the Master Clock in Washington ticks the stroke of twelve the delicately poised ball will fall, released by the same beat of the clock that announces the time to the rest of

the country. Any one who watches one of these time-balls just before the stroke of twelve, watch in hand, may easily determine whether his own timepiece is slow, fast, or on time. Thus the tick of the Master Clock drops these time-balls in some cases many thousands of miles away, as in San Francisco. By cable arrangement a time-ball is dropt every day in the city of Havana, Cuba. So swift is the speed of the electric current that if the repeating instruments and the wires are in perfect condition there is no difference in the time of the dropping of the ball in New York City and the dropping of the ball in San Francisco. The very second the Master Clock receives its message from the star the same tick releases the time-ball in New York City, in San Francisco, and in Havana, as well as many others in different parts of the country.

W. S. Harwood in a most interesting article describes the sending out of the time in the northwestern circuit from the Goodsell Observatory at Northfield, Minnesota. The official in charge of this observatory does this every night at nine o'clock. For sixty seconds he rattles away on a telegraph instru-

ment at his desk, spelling out the word "time, time, time"; then he waits an instant. Then he turns to his telegraph key again. Eleven thousand miles of wire are open to him. He is ruler of them all. Every telegraph instrument in all the vast territory of which the Goodsell Observatory is the center is silent; every operator has taken his hands from his key; throughout the whole length of these thousands of miles there is a strange silence. The seconds are slowly ticking away. Above the head of the observer there is a great observatory clock. At precisely two minutes to nine, after the telegraphers all along the miles of wire have been notified and have withdrawn their hands from the keys, the wires are switched into connection with the very clock itself, and all along the eleven thousand miles there is no sound but the tick, tick, tick of the observatory clock. Every beat of the great arteries of commerce is stopt; every throb of the news of all lands going out night by night over these wires from the great heart of the world ceases; even the sad messages of death and suffering, as well as the gay ones that tell of little babies born and young folks married and reunions of friends

promised—all these must wait while the great clock on the wall tells the message of the stars and makes itself understood in the language of time and eternity over these many thousands of miles.

All this shows us that in little towns hundreds and thousands of miles from the great centers, and in little, quiet village places and country farmhouses, humble men and women, many of them ignorant and unlearned, daily follow Emerson's suggestion, and, so far as the time of day is concerned, hitch their wagons to a star.

I have detained you with this long introduction, which is very much longer in proportion than the sermon, because the sermon itself is wrapt up in its thought. For it is just as true that we need to tell the time of day by a star in the moral and spiritual world as it is in the world of business and commerce. The exact time is often of the utmost importance in carrying on the gigantic business operations of our day; but it never is of so much importance as it is that we shall be right in the matters of character, in those things which pertain to the soul.

The writer of our text assures us that if we

study God's word with sincere hearts we shall be surrounded with the heavenly light and the day shall dawn upon us and Christ shall arise as the Day-star in our hearts. Here, then, we have our theme: What the star in the heavens is in its guidance of the Master Clock and in dictating time to the world, that Christ is to the Christian. We must get from him the time of day in morals and in the spirit and mastery of our lives.

Much has been said in our time in some circles, and it has been given a very large hearing and aroused an unprecedented amount of interest, concerning the possibility and the duty of walking in the footsteps of Jesus. This language has been made to mean the doing of the very things that Jesus did when he was here on earth. Now that does not seem to me to be possible or practicable in any way. One might as well undertake to put an eagle back into an egg from which it was hatched out two years ago, as to crowd back the conditions of modern life into circumstances similar to those which surrounded the life of Jesus Christ in Palestine. And these changes have very largely come about through the influence of Christ and his teach-

ing on the world. The teaching of Jesus and the story of his life were seeds sown in the world, and they have been carried to all lands and have sprung up everywhere and have brought forth fruit, in some places thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold. It is impossible for us to undertake, in this complex modern life which we know, to live in the same way, so far as doing the same things are concerned, that Christ did. But we can do an infinitely more real thing than that, something that will not be little and partial—we can live in the spirit of Jesus Christ. A man might do the same things that Jesus did and yet be a scoundrel. I have no doubt Judas lived as nearly in the same way that Christ did as did John. But what a vast difference between the two men! Jesus adapted himself to the circumstances by which he was surrounded. He went about doing good. He did the good that he had opportunity to do from day to day. So to be true Christians, and to tell the time of day in character from Christ as our Day-star, it is necessary that we shall come into such connection with Jesus that we receive sensitive and conscious direction from him and live daily in his spirit.

When a man says he has faith in Christ he may mean two or three very different things. He may have faith in Christ simply as a historic character. He may believe in Christ as he believes in Napoleon or Charlemagne, or Julius Cæsar. But such a belief in Christ will have no more effect on a man's character and conduct from day to day than will the knowledge that there is a Master Clock in the observatory at Washington have upon the time kept by my watch if I never bring it into connection with that clock and set my time-piece by it. We must get closer to Christ than that if he is to be the Day-star of our lives.

As a distinguished English minister has recently said: There is a great deal of discussion about the historic Christ, the Jesus of the Gospels, as he is called; and we make inquiry into the circumstances of his advent, into the reality or the unreality of the so-called Incarnation. We try to peer into his boyhood, we carefully weigh all the words that are reputed to him, and all the works that were ascribed to him; we follow him through his ministry, we look upon him as he died upon the cross. We discuss the question of his death and his burial, we make

much effort to establish the fact beyond all controversy that he was raised from the dead. We follow him to Olivet, and we lift up our eyes, and we see the cloud from heaven descending and Jesus received out of our sight, and we think of him, and rightly, as up yonder, at the right hand of power. We try to follow him there. We make pictures of him, we do everything that the ingenious imagination, helped and stimulated by all the historic facts, can do. When we pray we try to think of him. We have accepted the aid of artists. There are mental pictures, such as Rubens, such as Da Vinci, such as Muller conceived him. We are not satisfied exactly with any of these; we try to make a picture of him as he shines and glows upon the pages of these canonical Gospels, and we cry out to him away up yonder. The disciples said to him, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." How often we say to ourselves, Oh, show us this Jesus, who once was upon this earth, who died for me, who was buried, who rose again the third day, and now is ascended to the Father; how I would like to see him!

But Paul says that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. Now Paul never de-

spised or minimized the reality and the importance of what we may call the objective Christ, who was born in the manger at Bethlehem, whose blest feet trod the highways of Palestine, whose hands were laid upon lepers, and whose voice was heard by the ears of those who were in trouble and in distress. He did not minimize the importance of the Christ that hung yonder, stretched upon that cruel tree; he emphasized and made it the keystone in the arch of the Gospel he preached, that this Christ rose from the dead and ascended to the Father, and that he ever lives in heaven to intercede for us. But he insisted that, above all that, he dwells in us if we open our hearts to receive him.

And Peter declares that Christ becomes the Day-star to our hearts and lives. As the Master Clock throbs over thousands of miles of wire and drops a time-ball in a city three thousand miles distant, so Christ touches our hearts with a heavenly influence and guides us and controls us for righteousness.

The machinery by which the Master Clock in Washington is able to tick the message of the star to distant towns and cities is very delicate indeed, and needs to be very nicely

adjusted. So in the higher realm of the soul there must be complete and perfect adjustment of our will to the will of Christ in order that he may communicate to us the divine messages of life. The slightest dust of worldliness, the least impurity or selfishness, will break the spiritual current between our hearts and the heart of the Day-star.

There is a story of a steamer that went on the rocks and was wrecked. No storm was prevailing at the time, and the wonder was how the captain, who was a skilled and experienced officer, could have been careless enough to let his boat go so far from its course. The captain himself was as much surprised as anybody. The compass-box was not broken and the needle seemed to be all right, but upon examining the box he discovered a little black bit of something that looked like the point of a steel knife-blade. He remembered then that one of the sailors had cleaned the compass-box the day before and calling him he asked him about it. The sailor said he remembered cleaning it and said that while doing so he discovered a piece of rust or something of the sort which he tried to rub off, and as he did not succeed

he took out his knife and scraped it off, breaking off a part of the point of the blade in the box. That bit of blade had done all the mischief. It was exceedingly small, but it had been left in the box and was large enough to affect the needle and to draw it far enough away from its true direction to mislead the man at the wheel. It may be a little sin that has taken hold upon some of us, but if a little sin is encouraged the life is thrown out of touch with Jesus. Harken to the message, renew your covenant, and come into the light of his countenance.

How strange it is that we should find it so hard to get the consent of our own will to be guided by the divine will in spiritual things, when we are so willing to be thus guided in the lower realm. Whoever heard of business men or of railroad companies unwilling to have the benefit of the stars in correcting their timepieces? Men know that the best made clock in the world is not infallible; even the splendidly constructed Master Clock has its faults, and so somewhere there must be something to regulate even the regulator. This "somewhere" is in the sky, and the "something" is the silent clock-setting star

in the far heavens, that never changes, that has no shadow of variableness amid the changes of earth, a second-hand on the dial of God.

Is it not strange that men who take this guidance from the stars without question and even with gratitude refuse to take their time in the higher and nobler realm of the soul from the same heavenly source? Yet just as surely as the star gives the true time to the clock, so Christ is the only one who can give us the perfect standard of character for our human lives. As the star never varies, tho centuries pass by, so Christ is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." He will never deceive us, and if we set our lives by him they shall be without spot and without blemish. Surrender your will to Christ, put your will into electric, spiritual touch with Jesus, and you shall live the Christ life and know the supreme self-composure and peace of his heart. Someone sings our thought in a little song entitled "The Folded Will":

"O fluttering heart, that, like a bird, imprisoned,
Beateth itself against life's circling bars,

Lift thou a song to him who sees, clear-visioned,
Thy home beyond the stars.
Trust thou in God, to whom the night and day
Shine as one light that never fades away.

"Fold thou thy wings and wait the time appointed,
When, to thy joy, from earthly bonds set free,
Thine eyes behold, with heavenly powers anointed,
Green fields of liberty.
O prisoner of hope, in patience wait
Till God's hour strike, and opened is the gate.

"Thus shalt thou know, e'en now, the satisfaction
Of hearts that trust the 'Faithful and the True,'
The freedom of the soul, of faith in action
Soaring beyond the blue;
Thou need'st not wait for liberty until
The day shall break, if thou but fold thy will.

"O blessed peace, the peace of simply taking
The yoke of Christ to learn his promised rest;
The peace of lying still, thy choice forsaking,
To lean upon his breast;
The rest of *folded hands* from work self-wove,
The peace of *folded will* in his great love."

THE CALL OF GOD

“Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.”—*Isaiah* xliii. 1.

OUR theme lies in the sentence “I have called thee by thy name.” The purpose of the discourse is to comfort our hearts with the assurance that to the eye of God we are not lost in the crowd, but that just as in a family circle the true father or mother with a large family knows and cares for each one of the children with as much love and tenderness as if there were only a single child, so the Infinite Father cares for each one of his children, calls them by name, and does not forget any one of them in the hour of need. The Scripture is always the best commentary on itself, and I propose that we take a journey of observation through the Bible, and note some of the places and experiences in the lives of men and women where God has specially called by name those whom he would help and bless. God is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. There are no favorites

of fortune with him. We are all his children, he loves one as much as another, and he is ready to call us by name and bless us in the same way that he has those whose story is given us in his Word.

First: I want to call your attention to God's *call to reverence and worship*. Moses was going home with his flock of sheep one evening on the slope of Mount Horeb, when he saw a bush flaming with fire, and as he looked to see it burn down, and wondered who had set it on fire, he was astonished that the flames continued and showed no diminution. His curiosity was aroused, and he turned aside to see the great sight, and to discover why the bush was not consumed. His whole thought was curiosity. It was just a burning bush, that was all. He had not thought about God in it; it was only natural phenomena that stirred his curiosity. But as he turned aside a voice came to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, "Moses! Moses!" And the voice of God said to him, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and

the God of Jacob.” And we are told that Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

Now it was before this that Moses had made the great choice of God and his service instead of Egyptian fame and glory. Rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin in Egypt, with all its riches and honor, he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, having his eye upon the final reward. But it may be that life had dropt into something of a rut, and he went his usual rounds without much thought of divine things, and he needed this sharp call to reverence, to humility and sincerity of worship. Do you need that call? Has religion dropt into a matter of curiosity with you? Can you go through the day prayerless without serious rebuke? Can you go to the church and pass through the service without any deep and holy awe possessing your soul? Then may God’s call come to you to-day, with a new significance, substituting your own name for that of Moses. “Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” And may this place be aflame with the fire of the Lord from the

midst of which God shall speak to every one of us, calling us to reverent and devout worship!

Second: There is the call to service. There is the old temple where Hannah's little boy, Samuel, is training for the great work of his life. The call that comes at night, and the little fellow running out to the old prophet to find out what is wanted, for he does not know at first that it is the call of God, and then, at last, we see him roused up out of his sleep, but instructed and ready, and as he hears the strange voice say, "Samuel! Samuel!" he answers, with a tremor of fear, no doubt, in the voice, but with boyish eagerness and interest, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." And so he was called to the great work of his life. And there that night was begun a life of service, which gave assurance of a life of communion with God infinitely precious. Is God calling some of you to service now? Perhaps like Samuel you have been about the church for a good while. You have been a member of the church, it may be, for a year or for several years, but while you have learned a good deal of the machinery of the church work you have never really given

yourself to any earnest service for God and your fellow men. And now God has come to you with some great duty; some earnest and imperative work makes its demand upon you, and in a different way from the call of Samuel but just as certainly and just as surely God is calling you by name. If you answer the call with eager and sincere heart; if like Samuel you respond, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," God will speak more clearly to you, and it will be the beginning of a life of precious service to God and humanity. And it will be the beginning also of a more precious communion between your heart and the heart of your heavenly Father.

Third: There is the call of assurance. I see Jacob when his sons have come back from Egypt and told him the wonderful story that Joseph is alive and has come into great power and authority in the land of Egypt and has sent wagons to bring him down to Egypt where he can take care of him. Altho at the sight of the wagons Jacob's heart melted and he undertook to go, yet he did not feel easy about it until he had worshiped and sought to know whether God's blessing was upon him in the undertaking. And so after

they had made the journey to Beersheba, they paused and offered sacrifices to God. "And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father; fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation. I will go down with thee into Egypt." And the next day Jacob went on with a light heart. He had heard the voice of God calling him by name—the God who spoke to him at Bethel and revealed to him the shining stairway reaching up to heaven with the angels ascending and descending; the God who had sent his angel to wrestle with him at Jabbok ford, and had blest him there, changing his name from Jacob to Israel, because as a prince he had power with God and man and had prevailed; this same God had promised to go down with him into Egypt, and all was well. Dear friends, in all our undertakings let us offer up our sacrifices unto God; let us seek through humble and sincere worship God's will concerning us, and when we do the will of God we shall hear the voice of God calling us by name and have the assurance that we shall not go down into Egypt without

God, that the future can hold no danger we need to fear if God is with us and his hand of approval is upon our heads.

Fourth: We may hear the call of deliverance. Look at Abraham in the throes of a great trial. The Lord has commanded him to go afar to Mount Moriah, and there upon its summit to offer up his only son Isaac as a sacrifice. Isaac is the son of promise; all the hopes of the great-hearted man center in this son. That it was a terrible trial we can not doubt. But Abraham continues to trust God. All his life he has trusted God. He turned away from the well-watered plains of Sodom into the deserts where the pastures were poor because he trusted God and by the eye of faith looked for a city whose builder and maker is God. So, with trusting heart he goes on his journey. He climbs the mountain side with the wood and the torch for the sacrifice. The boy walking beside him says: "Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" And Abraham with a tried but trusting heart replies, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." So they went on until they reached the summit of the mountain.

Abraham built his altar, and laid the wood in order, and with all the tenderness of his great heart overflowing, bound the astonished Isaac and laid him upon the altar upon the wood. And then with trembling fingers Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. Then, and not until then, the angel of the Lord called to him out of heaven, and said, "Abraham! Abraham! . . . Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." It may be that some one of you here to-day is in the midst of a great trial of your faith. God has asked of you some great sacrifice, and you are tempted in your inmost soul to feel that God is unjust; that the sacrifice is too great; that it is too much to ask of anyone. Dear friend, perhaps this is just your message to-day. God can not ask anything of you that is not for the best. He knows the way out of every trial before you are asked to enter into it. If, like Abraham, you will trust God and give God his way with you, tenderly, with whole-hearted sacrifice, you too shall ere long hear your name called and know that it

is the voice of deliverance and see that God has opened up a way for your escape.

Fifth: There is a call of reproof for worry and anxiety. Jesus comes to see his friends Martha and Mary. He finds Martha cumbered with much serving. She was a great housekeeper, all very good in itself, but she was taken up so much with keeping her house in order and taking care of her guests in the right style that she got very little good out of the visits of Jesus, and Christ gently and tenderly reproofed her, because his heart was grieved at her great loss. He says to her, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Martha was so burdened with the care and anxiety of entertaining Jesus that she was likely to lose the great spiritual benediction which the visit of Christ was intended to bring to her home and her heart. And is it not true that some of you are in danger—in your burden-bearing and care and anxiety about the very work of the church itself, which in our day is for the entertainment of Jesus—likely to become so cumbered and

anxious about the secular machinery of it that you fail to receive the spiritual benediction which the visits of the Lord should bring to your heart? The purpose of the church is that through it we may see Jesus, that we may look into his eyes, that we may hear his voice, that we may catch his spirit; and if we fail in that it is all a failure for us.

Sixth: There is the sterner warning against spiritual pride. It was but a little while before the arrest of Jesus Christ. Simon Peter with all his impulsive earnestness is emphasizing his devotion to the Lord, and to his great astonishment Jesus says to him, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." And Peter answered boldly, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death." Jesus answered him, "Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." And so it turned out. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The proverb that "pride goeth before a fall" is often realized. If any of us are self-sufficient; if we are walking the way of life proud of our own morality

and of our own good conduct; if we have fallen into a self-complacent air concerning our own righteousness of life, and have in our hearts, if we do not have on our lips, a sneer of contempt when another falls into some great weakness and sin, then may God in his mercy give us the call of warning. And may you hear the call sharp and clear with your own name in it saying, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." Humility of heart, trusting in God for help and strength, is the only proper attitude for any one of us.

Some of you who have never yet become Christians need to-day to hear another call of God. Saul is on the way to Damascus. His heart is hot with anger against Jesus Christ. He has authority to hale Christians before the magistrates, and even to put them to death. But at high noon a great light shines about him and his company, so much brighter than the sun that they fall to the earth before it, and a voice out of this glorious light speaks to Saul, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." And with great humility of soul Saul surrenders at once to the call of Jesus.

He cries out humbly, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" From that hour he becomes a new man in Christ Jesus. Some of you have heard that call just as certainly and as surely as it came to Saul, but you have gone stubbornly on in your sin. God forbid that you should go on until there comes that other call of despair. Listen to Jesus as he stands above the city of Jerusalem, which is doomed to destruction for its sins. It has heard the call of God again and again and refused, and now Christ stands there with the tears flowing down his cheeks, and calls aloud, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." That awful call comes to individuals as well as to cities and to nations. God forbid that it should ever come to you!

THE BRAND PLUCKED FROM THE FIRE

“Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”—
Zech. iii. 2.

A POOR Hindu convert was once taunted by a European infidel, who asked him what Jesus had done for him. The Hindu took a worm, put it inside a circle of dried leaves and grass, and set fire to them. When the fire approached the worm, he snatched it up and put it into his bosom, exclaiming, “That is what Jesus has done for me. I was once exposed to eternal fire. The flames had even touched me, and I was a scorched and blackened brand, when God in his matchless grace plucked me forth!”

The text may suggest to us very properly the dangerous character of sin. It is a fire that burns at the heart. It will never go out of itself, and unless it is quenched, will burn to the lowest hell. Sin often smolders in the heart for a long time, and men are blinded to its danger because judgment is so long de-

ferred; but it is none the less dangerous because it does not work its ruin more speedily.

A report was received a while ago by the Navy Department at Washington from an officer on board a war vessel from Chinese waters, telling an extraordinarily interesting story about a derelict found floating around the Eastern sea. The *Fannie Kerr* was a four-masted bark built of steel. She left Newcastle in April, 1902, with a cargo of coal for San Francisco. She rounded the Horn safely, but her cargo caught fire in the South Pacific, and after trying for more than a month to extinguish the flames, the ship became so hot that the captain and crew abandoned her and took to their boats. They landed on one of the Hawaiian Islands, and made their way to Honolulu, where the captain made his report and the crew was discharged.

In March, 1903, the naval officer, bound from Yokohama to Formosa, sighted a vessel adrift, from which smoke seemed to rise. Approaching her he discovered that she was the long missing *Fannie Kerr*, which had been gradually drifting westward several thousand miles for nearly nine months, with her

cargo still on fire. But tho her final disaster was postponed, nobody doubts that the burning ship ultimately went to the bottom. There are men and women who have been on fire of sin, not nine months only, but nine years and more, and that deadly fire is certain to bring final ruin unless they are plucked from it.

St. James declares that there are sins of the tongue which can in no way be so well described as by comparing them to a fire. He says: "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." Someone commenting on this word of James says it is easy enough to see why the tongue of gossip and slander and envy and hate can do so much damage, because it is hell-lighted. The devil perverted man's powers at first; and he still inflames the corruption which he was the means of introducing into our nature. He applies the torch to the combustible materials which are stored up in every part of our mental and physical constitutions. He is still the great tempter and destroyer.

A tongue lighted with the evil fire is constantly working havoc with others. It is a firebrand, a torch, constantly lighting evil fire in other hearts. Mark Guy Pearse says that he once knew a lad, as pleasant, open-hearted, merry a boy as you ever saw. He was grown old enough to leave school and go to work.

"Come," said a companion one day, "come into the public-house, and have a glass."

The boy held back for a minute; he had never gone into such a place before, and he felt it was wrong.

"Oh, come on!" cried his friend, laughing, and taking his arm. "You must not be too particular, you know."

"Well," thought the lad to himself, "it's only once, and only just a little."

It was the same thing over again the next day. Then two or three times a day, and still it was only just once, and only just a little. And yet, after a few years, down in a wretched alley, in a miserable room, lying on a heap of rags, he lifted the foul face of a drunkard, a face so bleared and blotted that one shrank back from it frightened. That tempting tongue of his friend had set him on fire of hell.

The prophet Amos uses this same figure of our text. In referring to some who had been saved, he says: "I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning." The prophet in this case undoubtedly used the illustration as he did because he had in his mind the rescue of Lot and his daughters at the time of the destruction of Sodom. Against all warning, and led on by his greed and his overweening desire for worldly success, Lot had first set up his tent on the way to Sodom, and afterward, when through business associations he had ceased to be shocked at its wickedness, he went to live in the ungodly city. He had invested his money there, and his family had settled down about him in the doomed town. After a while the wickedness of that city became so great that God determined to destroy it from the face of the earth. But Abraham, known throughout the East as "the friend of God," prayed for Lot. Lot had been selfish with him and had treated him disrespectfully, but Abraham's heart was too great to hold malice, and he plead with God that Lot might be spared. So God sent two angels to Sodom

to the house of Lot to warn him of the sudden destruction which was coming upon the city and to urge upon him to gather his family together for immediate escape. And Lot, now grown to be an old man, went about in the town visiting his children. With the exception of two daughters, his children were married and settled down in homes of their own. They had become real Sodomites, and when Lot called on them that evening and told them of the angels and their warning, they laughed in his face, and scoffed at him, and refused to heed his warnings. He failed with every one of them. The next morning he stood broken-hearted, not knowing what to do. But the angels took hold of him by the hand, and hurried Lot and his wife and daughters from the city. Even then the wife turned back, and was lost. That very day the doom fell on Sodom. A rain more desolating than that which covered Pompeii fell on Sodom and Gomorrah, and Lot, having lost all his property, and all his friends, stood saved as by fire, a brand plucked from the burning.

It is to such fearful illustrations as this that God calls our attention when he seeks to make us comprehend the deadly character

of sin. Sometimes we hear people talking as tho sin were only a mistake, or at the worst a blunder of the judgment, a question of taste; but it is something infinitely more serious than that. It is rebellion against the law of God. It is a refusing to obey God, who has a just and righteous claim to our service and our love. Such sin unforgiven must mean eternal banishment from the presence of God. If we could only look upon things with clear eyes, realizing the value of eternity, we would shun sin with more horror than we would shun poison, or assassination, or death.

The Rev. Charles M. Sheldon recently wrote this little parable of a man who was weeping bitterly as if he had met with some great calamity, and the angel who was going by stopt and kindly asked:

“What is the matter?”

“I have had a terrible loss,” replied the man.

“I am very sorry to hear it,” said the angel, with a tear of sympathy. “Is it very terrible?”

“Very,” answered the man, weeping much harder than before.

“Would you mind telling me what it is?”

asked the angel, gently. "What is it you have lost?"

"I have lost my money!" exclaimed the man, weeping as if his heart would break.

"Oh," said the angel, "is that all? I thought from the way you were weeping that you had lost your soul."

And that is the way we would feel about it if we could see as clearly as those do who know the worth of the soul and the danger of sin.

Christ is seeking to snatch men from the burning. Some of the noblest souls that have glorified Christian history have been fire-brands already partially destroyed by sin. Many a man could have said with Richard Baxter, when he saw a poor criminal being led out to execution, "There, but for the grace of God, goes Richard Baxter."

Strange, is it not, that men who are already on fire of sin will refuse the outstretched hand of divine mercy that would pluck them from sin's burning? For that hand rejected leaves the sinner without hope. The fire of sin only continues to burn with a fiercer glow unto eternity. Some one has said most sadly of a sinful career:

“After the joys of earth,
After its songs of mirth,
After its hours of light,
After its dreams so bright,
What then?

“Only an empty name,
Only a weary frame,
Only a conscious smart,
Only an aching heart.

“After this empty name,
After this weary frame,
After this conscious smart,
After this aching heart,
What then?

“Only a sad farewell,
To a world lovèd too well,
Only a silent bed
With the forgotten dead.

“After this sad farewell,
To a world lovèd too well,
After this silent bed
With the forgotten dead,
What then?

“Oh, then, the judgment throne,
Oh, then, the last hope gone,
And then all the woes that dwell
In an eternal hell.”

There ought to be a sad and tragic interest in this study for every one of us who are Christians. Are we doing our whole duty to snatch these immortal firebrands from the fires of sin? It is impossible that we do not see upon every side of us men and women who are being consumed in the burning of sin. Are we doing our duty? Do we feel with sufficient keenness their danger, and are we, with real love and whole-souled earnestness, denying ourselves that we may snatch them from the fire?

The late Prof. Henry Drummond, whose last years were so fruitful in snatching sinning men from the fire, tells of a medical student at Edinburgh who was half through with his course of four years. He had worked very hard and had lived an entirely selfish life. One day he said to himself, "Here are four of the best years of my life, and I have never done a hand's turn to make better, or to help any other fellow." He went out and found another medical student who had come from the same part of the country as himself. He had gone to the bad. His people had given him up. He was drinking himself to death. For months he had not read a book. This first

man had not seen him for months, but he went out to hunt him up. He found the man still drunk, and said to him, "These are poor lodgings for you. I want to take you to my rooms." The other man said, "I am in debt." "Well, I will pay your bill," replied number one.

They gathered up the luggage, and number one led the way to his room. The next morning he said, "Look here, I have a little contract. We will mess here together for the next few months. I have written out here four articles, which we will both sign. The first is, neither of us to go out alone. The second is, if either of us have to go out alone, twenty minutes to be allowed to go to the Commons and back, overtime to be accounted for. The third is, one hour to be set aside every night for pleasure, anything but study; and the fourth, that by-gones shall be by-gones."

Things went well for a month; but one night number two threw down his anatomy and said, "I can not stand this any longer. I want to have a 'bust.'" "Very well," replied the other, "'bust' here. What do you want?" "I want some drink." Number one got some

drink, and number two had his "bust" there. In the course of the next three months it happened twice in the same way. And so the months passed.

One night number two said to number one, "I notice you reading a book. I see you read the Bible, but you never talk to me about religion." "If you choose we will read together," replied number one. He read a few verses, but number two stopt him and said, "That is enough now." For two years number one went right on living the life of Jesus Christ before the other man, and Drummond says that at the end of that time they passed out from college, and number one was only an ordinary success as a doctor, but number two was a brilliant man, and won a great success, and was known far and wide as "The Christian Doctor." Drummond said that when number one looked back over his college course he saw standing above it all, the most glorious thing in it, the face of that one man whom he had saved.

Let us not lose the greatest privilege that ever comes to any man or woman.

A FULL-PRICED RELIGION

“And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost.”—*I Chron.* xxi. 24.

ORNAN, the Jebusite, was the most extensive farmer in the land. His fields stretched far and wide, his sons were strong and industrious, and he himself a man wise and gracious. It was harvest-time in the fields of Ornan. The wheat had ripened, had been cut and cured, and scattered on the threshing-floor, and Ornan and his sons and his servants were busy threshing it out and separating it from the chaff and the straw. While the harvest work was going on suddenly a servant came running and with a quick salute to his master exclaimed in an excited voice that King David was drawing near and seemed bent on paying a visit to Ornan where he was at work on the threshing-floor.

Strange visions had preceded this visit of the king. It was a sad and fearful time among the people. A pestilence had come on

them, and multitudes of them were dying upon every hand. The king had seen a vision of an angel with a drawn sword, and the angel seemed to stand by the threshing-floor of Ornan, and the angel had commanded the prophet Gad, David's chaplain, to say to the king that he should go and set up an altar unto the Lord in the threshing-floor of Ornan, the Jebusite. David hastened at once to obey the command.

In the meantime Ornan and his sons had had a vision of the angel standing by their threshing-floor and had hid themselves at the sight of the drawn sword, fearing, no doubt, that the plague which had smitten so many was now to come upon them. So when the word came that David was approaching, Ornan hurried forth to meet him and bowed himself down to the ground in the presence of the king. But David wasted no time in ceremony. It is interesting to note how easy it is to take a short cut and get at the heart of a matter when a man is dead in earnest. People who only half mean what they say, and who scarcely know what they do mean, make a great deal of talk and palaver; but when great passions burn in a man's soul

they consume all useless verbiage and drive the tongue sharp to the center of human need. So David says to Ornan in clean, crisp sentences: "Grant me the place of this threshing-floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the Lord: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people."

Now Ornan was of a heathen tribe, but he had evidently come to believe in and accept the religion of the Hebrews. He worshiped the same God as David, and he was ready with the most gracious purpose of heart to surrender his threshing-floor for the place of worship. And not only so, but to be at the expense of the sacrifice to God. And so he replied to David, "Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I give thee the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all." He is ready not only to furnish the place for the altar, but to lay his oxen and his wheat upon that altar as a sacrifice to God. Ornan is a good example of earnest piety and honest public spirit for people in any age.

But our theme is in David's reply to Ornan.

The king responds to this generous offer, which must have touched his own generous and imaginative soul, by saying: "Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price; for I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost." God heard David's prayer, and accepted the offerings that were made in the new tabernacle on the threshing-floor of Ornan, and the angel was directed to put the drawn sword back into the sheath again, and the plague was stayed.

Here, then, is our theme. It is not a cheap religion which we are offered in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It cost a full price to begin with. It cost the life and the death of the Son of God. He who was rich in all the glories of the skies came down to earth and was born in a manger and worked in a carpenter shop as a part of the price. He who had legions of angels to come and go at his bidding became lonely and submitted himself to criticism, to harsh words, to treachery, to betrayal, to be beaten, to wear a crown of thorns, to be shamefully insulted, to die a cruel death upon the cross, to suffer all the pangs and agonies of a torturous death that he might pay

the price of our redemption. It is not a cheap ransom. We are not redeemed by the blood of goats, nor calves; but by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He paid a full price for our redemption. And we may come in his name, knowing that he has satisfied the demands of the law, and if we accept him as our Savior God will, in his name, and for his merit, forgive our transgressions, and we shall have peace with God.

Not only is our religion a full-priced religion in the great sacrifice which Christ made to redeem us, but it is a full-priced religion in that we on our part are required to surrender ourselves soul and body to the service of Christ. Paul says it is a reasonable service when we bring our bodies as a living sacrifice unto God. David did not send some servant to make a trade with Ornan for a place for the altar. He went himself. He talked at first hand; and not only so, he bought it with his own money and would not accept even a discount on the full price that was due for it. David knew that there would be no sacrifice if he secured the place and the offerings for nothing, or cheaply. He wanted great mercies of God, and he was determined that the

offerings should be at full price. Let us learn the lesson. We are always being tempted to try to get our religion at a discount, and to count it rather a shrewd bargain if we get off lightly in the way of money or service in helping on the cause of God. How we cheat our souls with such folly! A cheap religion is a poor thing at any price. It is only the man who gives his whole soul, all that he is and all that he has, to the service of God who knows the divine blessedness God is able to bestow upon his children. Let us give ourselves wholly to him. Booth-Clibborn has a little song very suggestive on this thought:

“No mortal tongue can e’er describe
The freedom of the soul,
When passed beyond all earthly bribe
To God’s complete control.
All things are his, yes, life and death,
Things present or to come;
In Christ he draws in peace each breath,
In Christ arrives at home.

“Baptized with fire for holy war,
To nothing can he hold,
For Christ alone to shine afar
Through Christ in danger bold.

The power of God his life receives
To bring on earth his heaven;
To him who Jesus' Word believes,
Jesus himself is given.

"When such a King our souls doth choose,
And offers us his throne,
Surpassing strange that we refuse
To be our Lord's alone.
Oh, never speak of sacrifice,
Where all is privilege!
How strange that 'dross' should e'er entice
To such a sacrilege.

"Arise, the holy bargain strike,
The part give for the whole;
Oh, reason not with one dislike,
But trust him with your soul.
All things are yours when you are his,
And he and you are one;
A boundless life in him there is,
Whence doubt and fear are gone."

No one can be greatly useful in the service of God who holds his religion cheaply. The men and women who are to be influential as the ambassadors of Jesus Christ must give the full price in consecration of themselves to the Lord's work.

A gentleman passing through a great de-

partment store had his attention drawn to a certain counter upon which a mass of goods was confusedly heaped, and over them was displayed in large letters a sign which we all have seen: "Slightly Soiled: Greatly Reduced in Value." As he walked on he remembered that the articles upon that table were all articles of luxury. They were the finest things in the stock from certain points of view. Delicate laces, and beautiful embroideries, and iridescent silks. And not one of them was "pot black." They were only "slightly soiled." But the finer a thing is, the easier it is to spoil it. It takes more to hurt a hoe than to ruin a razor. It requires less to nick a cut-glass dish than a granite-ware coal-scuttle. You can kick around a horse-blanket and not destroy its sale; but it is quite otherwise with a lace handkerchief. The goods on that table were beautiful rare things, and only slightly soiled; but that was enough to ruin them.

The gentleman who relates this incident reflected that it strikingly illustrated what was going on in the churches where many efforts were being made to win souls to Christ. He said to himself that in these efforts some of

God's people would find opportunities to speak a word to souls that "would see Jesus." But there would be others who had not wholly guarded their tongues; had not carefully kept the door of the lips; had not been well enough to go to the prayer-meeting much of the time, but were seldom too feeble to attend the play at the theater to its late close. They are not altogether without a hope; not without some interest in the Savior; not without a wish for the upbuilding of his kingdom; but they will have very little value in influencing anyone else to come to Christ. They are conscious, and everyone that knows them is conscious, that a too near contact with the world has left their Christian character "slightly soiled." It is the saddest thing in the world to see; for there is nothing finer known out of heaven than the soul that is washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. And when we take those white robes and soil them by worldliness until they lose all their charm and all their testimony for the Divine Lord it is enough to make an angel weep. Dear friend, put the question home to your heart. What kind of a religion is yours? Is it the bargain-counter sort, "slightly soiled; greatly reduced

in value"; or, are you giving Jesus the full tide of your love and devotion?

David was anxious to pay the full price because his heart was enlisted and he felt deeply the woes of his people. He felt that he held their lives in his hand and that it was his highest privilege to have a chance to do to the full measure what he could for the people whom he loved. Now if we can get into our hearts that wonderful saying of Jesus Christ that whatever service we render our fellow men in saving them he will take as done for himself, how much added earnestness and enthusiasm it will give to our service. If Jesus were here and you had a chance to entertain him, would you bring out the cheapest things you had? Would you set before your Master the poorest food you could find? Ah, the question answers itself. Nothing would be too good for Jesus. With eyes brimming with tears of gratitude you would bring out the best silver for the table, the best food that could be found, and the most loving and devoted service. Well, Jesus Christ says that anything we do for the humble man in the garret who has rheumatism, or the poor old woman out of coal in yonder cellar, or the lit-

the homeless waif, shivering and hungry on the street-corner, he will receive with the same love and the same reward as tho we were ministering unto himself.

While a ship was in dock in Japan a boy fell overboard. Some sailors jumped into the water after him, and when they got him out began to take measures to resuscitate him. The surgeon was not far off, and they asked him if their rolling him over and other things they were doing were all right. He replied, "Yes, you are doing all you can, and if you can't bring him around you've done the best you can." A few minutes later the doctor experienced a twinge of conscience at his comparative indifference to the lad, and thought he would go over and help them. So he went to the young fellow, and when he rolled him over and saw his face he saw that he was his own son. That surgeon was transformed in a moment. He began to work harder than any of the other men. He rolled up his sleeves, tore off his collar and tie, and began to breathe into the boy's nostrils and to use energetically every means known to science for his restoration. He toiled and worked over him for a long time, not daring to relax

his efforts for a moment, and it was only just as the sun went down that his first gasp of breath came and he knew that the boy's life was saved. The usefulness of the surgeon amounted to but little until his love and his interest were awakened. Then he was on fire, and held nothing back. He gave himself at full price then for the boy's restoration. Oh, for a religion at full price in all our hearts and lives!

I dare not close without a word to any man or woman here who feels that he or she is standing with the drawn sword of God's angel threatening because of sin. Jesus Christ has said that that is the exact condition of every one whose sins are not forgiven. He says that such are condemned already, and the threat of doom is over every one who, having broken God's law, has not sought and found forgiveness. How dare you go on living with that danger signal before you and yet delay the acceptance of Divine pardon? Only the other day in a neighboring State there was a terrible wreck, and more than a score of lives went out in horror. It all seems to have been caused by failure to heed danger-signals. The engineer said that he

saw the green light that told of a train two miles away, and he saw the red light that told him of danger near at hand, but still he took the chance, hoping the light would soon change to white, and thus he went to his own death and caused the death of many others. Dear friend, on this swift and breathless journey toward the grave and eternity the red light of danger flashes now before your eyes. The wages of sin is death. You are under condemnation for sin. At any moment the wreck may come. Oh, I pray God that you will heed the signal, and this very hour seek the Divine forgiveness. If you will surrender your whole heart and soul to Christ, the angel will put away the drawn sword into the sheath and you shall have peace with God.

THE BROKEN VASE

"She brake the box."—*Mark* xiv. 3.

SIMON was the social lion-hunter of the town. When any man came along whom all the world was curious about Simon invited him around to his house, and then he would invite his set to dinner, that they might have a look at him in private. There are plenty of people of the same sort yet. They do not care anything about literature or art, and never make their heads ache, or their hearts ache, either, over the deep problems of social or economic life; but let some poet or novelist, or some great philosopher or benefactor of mankind, come along, and they are the first to invite him to dinner. They want him because he is the social lion, the greatest curiosity in the city; and they like to gather in their social competitors and show off their catch.

Now Simon the Pharisee evidently invited Jesus to his house in that spirit; for tho he invited him to dinner, and gathered a circle

of his friends to meet him, he showed him very little respect and no kindness. He even omitted the oriental courtesy of water with which to wash his feet, and gave him no kind salutation at the threshold of his home. The man was willing to patronize Jesus, but there was in him no heart for Christ. Alas! how many are like that now!—willing to give Christ a dinner now and then, but who give him no tender reverence and no loving service.

While Jesus sat there in that heartless house, gazed at and questioned by curiosity-seekers, a woman came with a heart full of loving tenderness, with purpose to do honor to Christ. She had been a sinful woman, as these Pharisees knew. You may trust your self-righteous Pharisees every time for knowing everything that is bad about everybody in town. Self-righteousness has a keen nose for other people's sins. So when Mary came with her little jar or vase of precious and costly ointment, and poured it upon the head of Jesus, and then broke it, that it might never be used again, and that all the precious fragrance that it contained might be bestowed upon Christ, there were two protests in the

minds of those present. Judas said it was a terrible waste and a wicked extravagance. He was greedy and avaricious and carried the treasury bag and would have liked the value of that costly vase in his purse. Sim'on the Pharisee, being too rich to look at it from that standpoint, said Jesus must be a very common man, at any rate no prophet, or he would know that this woman was a sinner. But Jesus received her adoration with gracious love, and as she anointed his head and washed his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, he looked on her in loving appreciation and declared that her act should be known to the ends of the earth wherever his Gospel was proclaimed.

I wish to put special emphasis on the unusual and thorough character of this woman's worship, "She brake the box." Mary bought the most expensive perfume she could find—nothing was too good for Christ in her eyes—and having brought it, she broke the box and poured all the perfume on the head of him she loved with all her heart. To me there is something peculiarly impressive about that broken vase. There are many things that must be broken to be at their best. Speaking

of this, Dr. P. B. Power says that it is on broken grain that man is fed. It is by bruised plants that remedies are had for his healing. It was by broken pitchers that Gideon triumphed. It was from a wasted barrel and an empty cruse that Elijah was sustained. It was on broken pieces of the ship that Paul and his companions reached the land. It was amid the fragments of broken humanity that the promise of the higher life was given. Christ was broken on the cross for our salvation. It was by the bruised and broken bodies of the martyrs that Christianity spread over the earth. And by this broken box, the evidence of a woman's reckless love, throughout the wide world it is proclaimed how blest and glorious it is to do a whole thing for Christ. When the true story of all things shall be known, then will it appear how precious in God's sight, how powerful in his hands, were many broken things. Broken earthly hopes will be found to have been necessary to the bringing in of the better hope which endures forever. Broken bodily constitutions will be found to have been needful in some cases to the attainment of that land where the body shall be weary and sore no more. Broken

earthly fortunes are often essential to the winning of the wealth beyond the reach of rust and moth and thief; broken earthly honor to being crowned with the diadem which fadeth not away. Yes, even for what we have to accomplish here it often needs that we should be broken up into personal helplessness ere we can accomplish anything. It is along a channel grooved and marred by fierce currents that the precious ointment flows. So when we are broken and marred let us think of that shattered and broken vase, and how from it there flowed forth the perfume which made fragrant the body of Jesus for its burial.

I think we ought to lay great emphasis on the fact which is suggested by the story, that Jesus Christ deserves at our hands not usual and ordinary, but extraordinary, service. In all history where has anybody ever had such a heroic leader or such a tender lover as we have in the person of Jesus Christ? And yet there have been many lesser men who have been followed with more devotion, with more enthusiasm and self-sacrifice, than many Christians give to their Lord. When the soldiers of Napoleon won such glorious battles

through their heroism, and performed deeds of bravery which seemed miraculous, the world looking on said, "No wonder they do that. See what their leader does." When Napoleon, sword in hand, led his army across the bridge of Lodi, taking greater risks than he asked of any of his soldiers, the world was not surprized that every common soldier that day was a hero. But is it not wonderful, when we consider what Jesus Christ has done for us, that we can keep our self-respect and be satisfied to do as little for Christ as we do? We need to go back again and read over the old simple story of his coming to earth, of his life of poverty and trial, of his shame and humiliation, of his agony on the cross in our behalf. If this gets deep into our hearts, surely we will break our alabaster box and pour forth our whole-hearted service before our Lord.

It is a shameful thing that in our day whole-hearted, passionate service for Jesus Christ, which breaks the vase for him, which runs risks in his name, is no more popular in many circles than Mary's act was with Simon and Judas. Mr. Spurgeon said that mediocrity in religion is liked best by the world. If some-

body does a deed like Mary's, showing extraordinary devotion to Christ, the general verdict of the community is likely to be, "It is very romantic, very sentimental, and quite unnecessary." The world likes a dead level of mediocrity in matters of religion. Its perpetual cry is, "Now, do be moderate!" He said he was once preaching in a very flat part of England, when one day a farmer went out with him for a walk, and just as the preacher was inwardly thinking it was about the most deplorable bit of country he had ever seen—as flat as a table, with here and there a ditch—the farmer suddenly stopt, and said, "Now, sir, this is what I call a really fine view." Spurgeon looked at him with astonishment; but with all simplicity the man said, "I call this really a fine view; for whichever way you look there is nothing to break it. Now, in Kent and many other counties, wherever you look, there is some big hill or tree that stops the view, but here there is nothing." There are some people who seem to have this idea of Christian beauty. Its charm lies in that there is nothing to attract attention. To use a Western proverb, "The man's church has no influence on either his religion or his poli-

tics." I have often heard it spoken as a compliment about a man as a Christian, "Oh, so-and-so is a fine man. He never forgets himself." Now the man who never forgets himself is not worthy the name of man. A man who never forgets himself is a poor, selfish mortal. If we love Jesus Christ as we ought to love him, we shall often forget ourselves, and, like Mary, spend all our living that we may put honor on his head.

The things that make history worth reading, and make us thank God sometimes that we are men and women, are the little touches here and there where men forget themselves and "break the box" in some noble and heroic act of devotion.

In October, 1793, twenty-one Girondist deputies stood on a scaffold in Paris, awaiting their death; and, as they stood, they sang the Marseillaise hymn in a chorus of which one voice was silenced every minute by the guillotine, and on till the last man they sang their song of faith and hope, that liberty should triumph.

It made my heart beat quicker when I read that Dreyfus refused to stay away from the funeral of Zola, tho he was assured that he

risked his life by going. Zola had borne hardship and persecution and shame for him when he was friendless, and nothing could keep him from showing that he in return carried a grateful heart in his bosom. But when we reflect what Jesus Christ has been to us, and how he not only bore shame and persecution on our behalf, but died for our redemption, shall we not give him uncalculating service?

As Christians we are under constant temptation to forget that we owe everything we have and are to Christ. He bought us from our bondage, and we are only stewards for Christ over all that we have—our talents, our strength, our time, and our money. If you have read that great story by Lew Wallace, “Ben Hur,” you will recall that the prince of the house of Hur was a very rich man. He trusted his steward with the care of his wealth. He was drowned at sea; his widow, daughter, and son lived in Jerusalem. One day, when the Roman soldiers were passing the house, as the son leaned over the parapet of the roof, a loose brick fell; the officer thought it was an attempt to kill him; the son was sent to the galleys, the mother and daughter were imprisoned. One day the

steward came to Jerusalem in search of the family; the Roman officers seized the steward and tortured him to make him give up his master's property, but he was made of rare metal. He might die, but he would never break a trust. He was carried to his home. He kept on with his business. Again he was seized. On the rack every bone was broken. Not a penny would he surrender. He was wheeled about in a chair; the keen intellect gathered to itself its forces; he became the richest man in the Roman Empire; his ships were on every sea.

One day Ben Hur stood in the presence of his steward and said: "I have come for my own." The steward questioned him, and was satisfied with his identity. From the safe the steward brought the money and said: "Your 120,000 talents have become 637,000. You are the richest man in the Roman Empire. It is all yours." Oh, my friends, there is stewardship for you! Broken on the rack, twisted and torn in the torture chair, and yet with fidelity holding it all for his master. Are we that kind of stewards for Jesus Christ? We may not have had much committed to us, but we should be as faithful and devoted as if it

were a great amount. The Master said that in the great day of reckoning those who had been faithful over a few things should hear the gracious words, "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, thou shalt be ruler over many things." But if we are faithless in the few then are we bankrupt indeed!

The story is told of a rich lady who dreamed that she went to heaven and there saw a mansion being built. "Whom is that for?" she asked of the guide.

"For your gardener."

"But he lives in the tiniest cottage on earth, with barely room enough for his family. He might live better if he did not give away so much to the miserable poor folks."

Further on she saw a small cottage being built. "And whom is that for?" she asked.

"That is for you."

"But I have lived in a mansion on earth. I would not know how to live in a cottage."

The words she heard in reply were full of meaning. They were these: "The Master Builder is doing his best with the material that is being sent up."

Then she awoke, resolving to lay up treasures in heaven.

Is it not a pertinent and interesting question to put to ourselves, What are we sending up? What kind of material are we building into our every-day life?

An eloquent Southern writer tells us that those wonderful Navajo blankets are really a work of religion. Through the kinky, bristling twine of the warp are woven the hopes and aspirations of an immortal soul. In the warm colors are exprest the ardors of passionate hearts. The sand-storms they have faced, the cloudbursts under which their backs have bent, the smiling sunshine that has dried their wool, all the adverse and the good fortunes that have befallen are wrought into the intricate designs. The squaw prays as she pushes the wool-card, and she prays as she twirls the distaff in her hands or rolls it on her lap; she prays as she pounds the woof-strands with her scrub-oak batten. A Navajo blanket is all a prayer, a human document, a biography bright with the joy tints of canary yellow, dark with the olive green of pain. One is drawn to it because one's heart is moved by its ineffable, intangible humanness. One is strangely moved to both laughter and tears by its exquisitely variant colors, each ex-

pressing an emotion by its warmth of blended fibers, each throbbing to a note of triumph or of wo.

The making of our lives ought to be like that, the constant weaving of a fabric that is made sacred and divine by our love and our prayer. If our lives are only secular, if we are here only to eat and drink and build houses and lay up money, and then die and leave it, surely life is not worth the living. There is nothing heroic, nothing romantic, nothing splendid about living if life is only length of days, and we are only animals to be kept quiet and in good order. But if we are the children of God, if we are the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, our Divine Lord and Savior, if we are, day by day, showing our love to him by our service to his weak and sick, by the money we give for his kingdom, by the thought and time we devote to him, so that after a while, when the sands of life run out for our earthly stay, it shall be only going home to render an accounting of our stewardship and to enter into the joy of Jesus forever—then, indeed, life may be brave and glorious. Let us not be miserly with Jesus. Let us break the vase and pour

out all the fragrance on his head. The poet sings truly when he says:

“Christ wants the best. He in the far-off ages
Once claimed the firstling of the flock, the finest of the
wheat,
And still he asks his own with gentlest pleading
To lay their highest hopes and brightest talents at his
feet.
He'll not forget the feeblest service, humblest love;
He only asks that of our store we give to him
The best we have.

“Christ gives the best. He takes the hearts we offer
And fills them with his glorious beauty, joy, and peace.
And in his service, as we're growing stronger,
The calls to grand achievements still increase.
The richest gifts for us on earth or in the heaven above,
Are hid in Christ. In Jesus we receive
The best we have.

“And is our best too much? O friends, let us remember
How once our Lord poured out his soul for us,
And in the prime of his mysterious manhood
Gave up his precious life upon the cross!
The Lord of lords by whom the worlds were made,
Through bitter grief and tears gave us
The best he had.”

UNDER THE WINGS OF GOD

“The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.”—*Ruth* ii. 12.

It is not to tell you the story of Ruth, beautiful and fascinating as it is, that I have chosen this text, but rather to study with you the privileges of a poor sinful human life in taking refuge under the wings of God. This figure of wings as an illustration of protection and loving care on God's part toward his children is often used in the Bible. Moses in his swan song just before climbing Mount Nebo to look upon the promised land and die, singing of God's dealings with Israel, exclaims:

“As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him.”

David uses this figure with great effectiveness. On one occasion he cries out to God:

“Hide me under the shadow of thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me.” Again he says, “How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.” And again in an anthem of trust and confidence he sings: “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust.” Christ uses this figure with graphic force. When standing above Jerusalem, he cries: “How oft would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!”

Let us inquire what we shall find under the wings of God.

First: I am sure that every true repenting sinner will there find *forgiveness*. The forgiveness of God is so wonderful that it is hard to find illustrations, except as we turn to incidents of God's saving love in observation and experience about us. Doctor Torrey tells that one night in New York City a wealthy man who uses his money in befriending others and not for his own comfort was down in the

west part of that city when he saw coming up from an underground den of infamy one of the vilest women in New York, a woman who had been sold into a life of sin when a child of eleven by her own mother, and she had been leading that life for fourteen years, as depraved and vicious as a human being ever becomes. But that night, as she struggled up into the street, her heart was sick and tired with sin, and she leaned up against a lamp-post and uttered a groan, and the quick ears of this good man, as he passed by, caught it, and he went to this poor outcast woman and told her of the love of God. Then he provided a home for her, for she had none, and she turned from sin and accepted Christ. All her sins were forgiven and she became one of the most beautiful Christian characters in New York City. Her name was Nellie Conroy. But her health was shattered by the life she had lived in the past, and she only lived two years after her conversion. One night during this time, Nellie Conroy stood up in the Cooper Institute and spoke to an audience of three thousand people, while the tears ran down her cheeks and down the cheeks of the entire audience as she told the story of the pardoning

love of Jesus Christ. The night came for Nellie Conroy to go home. Mr. Crittenden, for that was the name of the man who had brought her to Christ, went to call upon her, knowing that her time was short, and as he entered the bedroom where Nellie was dying, she looked at him and said: "Uncle Charlie"—he was not her uncle really, but all these poor ones whom he had befriended called him "uncle"—"Uncle Charlie, I am going home to-night, and I shall see Florence." Florence was Mr. Crittenden's little daughter, who had died at the age of four, and through whose death he had been led to consecrate himself and his wealth to the work of redeeming the lost. She said: "I am going home, and in a very short time now I shall see Florence." Then a brighter look came into her face, and she said, "Yes, Uncle Charlie, in just a few minutes I will see Jesus"; and the spirit of Nellie Conroy went up to meet her King, cleansed by the pardoning love of God and the atoning blood of Jesus Christ.

It is the supreme characteristic of divine forgiveness that it is like Aaron's serpent that changed to a rod and under God's blessing budded and blossomed. Under the touch

of God, new recuperative processes start up in the heart and life of the man or woman redeemed from sin through the love of Christ, and a more beautiful life than was before dreamed of becomes possible. God's forgiveness is like a mother's; it takes the sting out of the memories of past wrongs and makes it possible for the forgiven sinner to look back without remorse upon the sins and blunders of the past. Just how this can be we can hardly explain. It is the infinite love of God in Jesus Christ. Benjamin Taylor must have had something of this in his mind when he sang that beautiful song of "The Isle of the Long Ago." Tenderly he tells us that:

"There's a magical isle up the river Time,
Where the softest of airs are playing;
There's a cloudless sky and a tropical clime,
And a song as sweet as a vesper chime,
And the Junes with the roses are staying.

"And the name of this isle is the Long Ago,
And we bury our treasures there:
There are brows of beauty and bosoms of snow—
They are heaps of dust, but we loved them so!
There are trinkets and tresses of hair.

"There are fragments of song that nobody sings,
And a part of an infant's prayer;
There's a lute unswept, and a harp without strings,
There are broken vows, and pieces of rings,
And the garments that *she* used to wear.

"There are hands that are waved when the fairy shore
By the mirage is lifted in air;
And we sometimes hear, through the turbulent roar.
Sweet voices we heard in the days gone before,
When the wind down the river is fair."

Second: Whoever creeps under the wings of God will find *quickenened intellect and added confidence in his own ability and power to do things that are worth while*. The story of the Christian centuries is the story everywhere of how Christianity accepted in the heart quickens the intelligence and awakens to life possibilities before unknown. Look at those first disciples—dull, heavy, unlettered men who became famous orators and glorious in intellect as well as heart when Christ led them to the refuge under the wings of God. The whole story of the race is like it. Jeremy Taylor, one of the greatest of the English preachers; Richard Arkwright, founder of the great cotton industries; and Turner, the glorious painter, were all barbers and dreamed

of nothing more intellectual until the spiritual touch opened their eyes. John Bunyan was a drunken Bedford tinker until his wife led him to Christ. Rare old Ben Jonson was a bricklayer. David Livingstone was a weaver; but one morning he was the only boy in the old Scotch kirk and the discouraged preacher gave all his attention to him, and winning him to God opened Africa to Christianity. Henry M. Stanley was a workhouse boy and went to Africa with a reputation for untruthfulness and infidelity, but Livingstone won him to Christ and that quickened him into a great man whose name will be immortal. Carey, the founder of modern missions, was a cobbler who, finding Christ, made his name glorious to the ends of the earth. George Whitefield was born in a liquor saloon and was himself a barkeeper till he ran across a little book entitled "Law's Serious Call to the Unconverted." Finding Christ, he no longer wanted to be a barkeeper. He wrote to Charles Wesley and God led him on to his great ministry. And this is going on everywhere. The greatest preacher in Boston to-day at eighteen years old was a truckman, with no thought of any greater influence in the world, until some-

body led him to Christ; after that all things were possible. No doubt that to the young men and young women now listening to me God has given ability and power to bless the world which you have never dreamed of, and which indeed will not be possible until you come under the wings of God and your abilities are warmed into life and activity.

Third: Under the wings of God there is *freedom from the power of sin and a sense of divine sympathy with our sorrows.* A sinful habit is the worst tyrant in the world. Prof. Henry Drummond tells of a man who had given himself to sin and indulgence, who had to consult a specialist about his blindness, which had resulted from his iniquity. The physician said, "You must give up your sins or in three months' time you will be a blind man." The young man looked out at the light playing upon the grass, and he said, "Farewell, sweet light; in three months' time I will be a blind man. I can not give up my sin."

This incident reminds us of the story which Lord Byron tells in his poem concerning the prisoner in the dungeon on Lake Geneva. He describes Bonnevard having been kept in

prison for so many years that altho he was fighting for liberty he does not want his liberty. Byron makes Bonnevard say:

“At last men came to set me free.
I asked not why, I recked not where;
It was at length the same to me,
Fettered or fetterless to be;
My very chains and I grew friends,
So such a long communion tends
To make us what we are, e’en I
Regained my freedom with a sigh.”

But he who comes to God through Jesus Christ and finds refuge under the wings of forgiving love is not only made free from sin but is made fit for that freedom and is assured in his own heart that he has the sympathy of God in every trial and temptation. Human sympathy is sweet, the sweetest thing the world has to give, but the sympathy of Jesus Christ is better yet. If I speak to any one who has become bitter in spirit and discouraged concerning your own soul, I would I could give you a glimpse of Jesus Christ as the pitiful one, the one altogether lovely. J. M. Barrie, in his beautiful book on his mother, tells us that his mother was laid prostrate by the death of an elder brother. She kept to her

room, she was dumb and silent and hopeless, and the doctor sent him in, a younger brother. The mother seemed to think it was the lost boy come back again; but he said, "It is not him, mother, it is only me." That rallied the old woman, and she became herself again by the introduction of another son into her horizon. So to the discouraged soul Christ comes, who said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; he who put his shoulders under the burden of humanity, he who will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. He is stronger than the strongest father, and tenderer than the tenderest mother.

A soldier was having his arm amputated in the Crimean War. He objected strongly to it until he saw Florence Nightingale standing by the side of his bed. Then he said: "If that lady will take hold of my hand I will go through with this, but not without." The Christian may have to go through much, but he who with faithful heart, with humility of soul, seeks the protection of the wings of God shall have always by his side not a tender nurse, but the Lord Jesus Christ, and he can look up into his face and say, "If he takes

hold of my hand I will go through it all, I can stand it all."

Fourth: Under the wings of God alone is the soul sure of *happiness and peace*. Peace in the hour of stress and trial which must come to every human life is the dearest boon the human heart can ever know. It is a boon which no wealth can purchase and which no amount of riches can insure to its possessor. It is a boon which neither position nor fame nor power can bestow upon any one. It is of the spirit, and outward worldly resources can neither bestow it nor the lack of them take it away. Some of the most rich and famous people in the world have been the most miserable. Queen Elizabeth, when she was surrounded by wealth, pomp, and pageantry, was chagrined to the heart because the artist who was painting her had minutely put in the wrinkles upon her face, and she stamped her foot and cried, "You must paint me without those wrinkles!" When Hogarth, the great original artist, was at his highest artistic triumph, he, too, was wounded to the heart because the king would not accept the picture which he had dedicated to him. For George II. cried, "Who is this Hogarth? Take this

picture out of my presence.” When Sir Walter Scott was near his end he was fumbling one day over an inkstand and the pen, and, finding he could no longer write, he who had been so great a writer turned and said to his daughter, “Take me back to my room; there is no rest for Walter Scott except in the grave.”

There is no peace that is abiding save that which comes from the consciousness of the overshadowing wings of God through the atoning love of Jesus Christ. Watts the famous artist painted a great picture of Hope, sitting on a globe, whirling through space. Her eyes are bandaged. She sees not where she is going; and yet there is no look of despair or terror upon what can be seen of the calm face. She holds in her hand a lyre, every string of which is broken but one. Out of that unbroken string she seems to bring forth with her fingers some music which gives joy, for the lips are parted by a smile. When Watts was asked what was the unbroken string in her lyre, the artist—as great a prophet as painter—said, “The unbroken string is the love of God in Jesus Christ.”

The supreme peace of the trusting Chris-

tian heart comes from perfect harmony between the soul and God. A traveler who was crossing the Atlantic while in mid-ocean went into a small room where the delicate instruments of the Marconi telegraph system were arranged, and all across the ocean, even when the tempest and the winds were at their wildest, messages were coming from one side or the other of the ship, messages to passengers on board. The curious traveler saw the keyboard, and he noted the change occasionally of the keys. In answer to his inquiry the attendant said to him: "This is the key of Sandy Hook. If I place this plug in here, this instrument will be attuned perfectly and in perfect harmony with the Sandy Hook instrument, otherwise, if it were deviating ever so slightly, no message would be received. The traveler went away thinking how much this was like the relation between heaven and earth—when the instrument of the heart is keyed to the pitch of divine life and obedience, then messages come from the throne of Christ to the heart and answers there are recorded. We know his will when we are set to obey it. The life in Christ immediately keys the soul to the divine pitch and the messages are not then sent in vain.

In perfect assurance that there is no human soul for which this peace of God which passeth all understanding is not possible, I call you every one to shelter beneath the wings of God. You may always put God to the test. "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!"

HEAVEN

“For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”—*Heb.* xi. 10.

ABRAHAM was a pilgrim and a traveler who dwelt in tents and never stopt long enough in any one place to build a house for himself, never got legal title to but one little spot of ground, a place to bury his dead, and yet his face was toward the future and he dreamed of a city that should be eternal. From the earliest story of mankind all the tribes of men have been hoping and dreaming about that city, and making pictures of the happiness they are to know therein. The old Egyptian with infinite pains built pyramids and marvelous sepulchers where he might bury his dead whom he counted worthy of an honorable place in the great city of the silent, and waited with confidence their restoration to new life and happiness. “The philosophy of the Greeks, even in its most coldly intellectual period, could not web over nor hide the gates of the eternal world from the seeking souls

of the sighing millions, and long before Cicero looked scornfully up to Olympus, saying that he saw no gods there, but only ice and snow; long before Apollo, now marble mute and reft of his good right hand, shook his egis of confusion over the startled swarm of the destroying Atilla, the Greeks had learned to look beyond Olympus; had raised altars to the unknown God, and touched the garment hem of Jehovah. The rude sea-king of the north, who laughed at storms and toyed with tempest as a child with rattles, singing, in the face of warring elements and battling men, songs of his fair-haired bride in her hut-nest, by some dark, mysterious fiord, was nerved to almost superhuman effort of grandest valor by the priest-drawn picture of Valhalla. It was a heroically grim idea, cradled in the craggy north and christened in human blood; but it represented, nevertheless, the nobler instinct of the soul trying to burst through the barriers of superstition and brutishness. The Eskimo living his barren life in a land of ice and snow looks to another world for that full feeding which to him means happiness. He dreams of fishing and hunting all day, and sitting in the evening by a roaring fire on the

seashore eating his fill of whale blubber and walrus meat. In fact, God has not so lowly roofed the brain of any race but that the birds of fancy may nest beneath their eaves and sing sweet songs of future joy for earth-tired, clod-weary souls."

But while all men have these dreams and longings for heaven, bubbles that rise to the surface from the long-forgotten youth of the race, it is only in the Bible, the book of God and the revelation of Jesus Christ, that life and immortality are brought to light and heaven gathers form and substance and becomes real to the hearts of men.

I want to call attention, for our comfort and inspiration, to the fact that we are not permanent citizens of this world. We are only traveling through, pilgrims, as our fathers were; we are going somewhere, and if our faces are turned thither, that somewhere is heaven. It is a place, a city, just as surely as New York and London are cities. It is a beautiful city. The most beautiful things that the world boasts are used to describe to us, or rather to suggest to us, the beauty, the glory, and the magnificence of heaven. When John saw this great city he declared that the

light of it was like unto a stone most precious, that the wall was of jasper, the city was pure gold like unto clear glass, and the foundation stones of the walls of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. One foundation stone was jasper; the second sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; and so on through twelve different varieties, the twelfth being an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

And through the midst of this glorious city John saw flowing a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and in the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruit and yields her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

It is toward this glorious city, with its jasper walls whose foundation stones are garnished with jewels, where the gates are pearls, where the paving stones are made of gold, with a shining river of the water of life running through it, with its gardens and

orchards forever blossoming and forever yielding fruit, that we are journeying.

But the characteristics to which I have already called attention are insignificant compared to other characteristics which are made known to us in the Word of God. The climate of the city puts it out of all comparison with any city on the earth. In this world some places are much more healthy than others, but I have never yet seen a city without physicians nor one without a graveyard. Hospitals and undertakers and cemeteries are a very important part of the necessary conditions of our modern cities. But here is a city where no one shall ever be heard to say "I am sick"; where there shall never be heard a moan of pain; where the passing of time will have no effect upon the health, or strength, or vigor, or happiness of anyone; where none shall say, "I am old," but where eternal virility and life shall animate every soul.

Heaven is a city without poverty. None are hungry there. They have appetite in abundance, but they are fed at heaven's table. Desire is joy and not pain, for there is abundant supply. When we take into considera-

tion the fact that more than one-half the human race go to bed hungry every night, it is a glorious thought about heaven that hunger shall not be written upon any gaunt face in its streets.

Heaven is a city without flats and tenement houses. In heaven every man owns his own house with eternal guarantee from Almighty God, and it is built specially for him under the direction of his divine Lord. Jesus assures us that he has gone to prepare a place for us, and tho there were already many mansions in his Father's house, he would prepare personally for each one of his disciples. Did you ever have a house that perfectly suited you? A house which if you could alter it for the wishing, you would not change? I do not believe it. I have looked over many a palace and castle and magnificent home in all parts of Europe, and I have often asked myself that question, and I have never found one that I would not want to change before moving in. It would take a good many improvements in the most palatial residences in the world to fit them to your taste or to mine. But in heaven there is building for you, if with sincere heart and trusting soul you are

journeying thither, a house fitted completely to your needs and desires. And when Jesus Christ shall come to receive you at the hour of death, it will be to escort you to a home which will be home indeed. No city in the universe is growing like heaven. From throughout all the lands and from among all peoples Jesus Christ our Savior is taking contracts for houses in heaven for those who are forsaking their sins and turning unto him for salvation.

But I have not begun yet to tell you the beautiful characteristics of heaven. One might live in the most beautiful palace in the world, and yet have no happiness there. That has often been the case. Solomon lived in a palace, and had unlimited wealth, and servants gathered from the ends of the earth to minister to him. He had kings and queens to do him honor. And yet, tho the earth was ransacked to find wealth and servants and music and entertainment to minister to the man who above all others on the earth had the intelligence to appreciate them, he was not happy, and in the weariness of a life that grew sadder as it went on he exclaimed, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." So indeed

heaven might have its walls of jasper, its gates of pearl, its streets of gold, its mansions of comfort and beauty, and men and women might live there, where they drank of the water of life and partook of the fruits of the trees of immortality, and still find heaven a weariness and a bore and long for death. It is sin that turns earth's paradise into a hell, and sin would turn heaven itself into hell. But there is no sin in heaven. There will be nothing to harm or to hurt in that city. No burglars, no liquor saloons, no gambling halls, for no man or woman there will try to harm anyone else. The law of that city is love, and love worketh no ill to his neighbor.

The people of heaven are engaged in most joyous occupations. As there is no sickness nor pain, there is no death. As there is no sin, there is no church. John said he saw no temple in all the heavenly vision. The church stands in the midst of the world as a fortress, as a hospital, to help and comfort, to reform, to minister to the needs of the world that come through sin; but in the heavenly city where there is no sin there is no church. Every street and every home is fragrant with incense that goes up from loving hearts to

God. It is a city full of joyous and charming music, music of praise. All is joy there. Tears are banished at the gate, and they are not needed, for where there is no sorrow, and one is never in trouble, there is no need even for tears of sympathy. From that city, to visit God's far-off possessions and minister to his children, the citizens of heaven go forth in loving visitation. No doubt many of our loved ones who learned their lessons of mercy and good will while they served God here on earth often come back to us now and minister to us in ways that we know not of. Heaven is not a place of idleness, but there the weary shall rest; those that have been sorrowful shall be forever glad, and those that exult in service shall have eternal vigor with which to serve their Lord.

It is impossible that anyone shall have such a picture of heaven before the eye of his faith, and so meditate upon it and rest his heart upon it that it becomes a real thing, without being tremendously influenced by it. The paragraph connected with our text shows what an effect it had upon Abraham. The writer of this book says: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place

which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles, with Isaac and Jacob, for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." That was the effect the hope of heaven had upon Abraham. It made him brave and generous and good. And the writer goes on naming them one after another—Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Gideon, David, Samuel, and others, "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopt the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again; and others who were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goat-

skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Why all this heroism and self-denial? What was the secret inspiration of these glorious deeds that gild the history of humanity? The answer is in our text. Like Abraham, they also "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

And so I am sure that if we keep a vision of heaven fresh in our hearts it will help to make us brave and generous and good. How could it be otherwise? The hope of heaven is bound up with the tenderest and most sacred things that have entered into my life; it is a part of my very self. If I miss heaven think how much I shall miss, and how utterly worthless will be everything else that I have called my own. My father, who stood to me as my best interpretation of God since the day when with my baby fingers I played with his beard until white-haired and venerable he sent me his blessing from his death-bed, beside the sunset sea, is in heaven. My little sister, who in my boyhood years bade farewell to earth, is in heaven. My first-born son,

a bright, manly boy who had linked our hearts to him with bonds infinitely stronger than steel, faded from us over yonder in Cincinnati, and we laid the beautiful little boy away in Spring Grove Cemetery, and were able to go on without despair, tho our hearts were breaking, because we knew he was in heaven. Many of the dearest friends that I have known along the path of life, men and women for whom I would have died, and who would have as willingly died for me, are in heaven. I can never see them again outside of heaven. If I miss heaven I miss them all. My mother wrote me the other day about the scattered condition of the family, how great the distance between our homes on earth, and then she thanked God for the hope that tho it was not probable that we would all meet in this world again, it was a glorious certainty that we might all meet in heaven. Heaven is our trysting place. God help me, I must be there.

What will making a little more money, or gaining a little more temporary applause, or taking a little more luxurious comfort, repay me for the loss of heaven? If you were to give me all the millions of the Vanderbilts and the Rockefellers and the Goulds com-

bined, and give me all the honor of all the kings and the statesmen poured into one goblet of fame, and give me all the luxury and all the ease of all the palaces of earth condensed for one human body to rest upon and revel in, for the few short years it is possible for me still to live on the earth, what beggar's rags, what worthless ashes they would be compared to the hope of heaven and the meeting there in eternal reunion and fellowship with everyone whom I have loved and delighted in throughout my whole life. God help us, we must not miss heaven! We can miss money if we must; we can miss worldly success if we must; we can miss honor and praise if we must; we can endure hardships, and bear burdens, and endure pain all our lives, if necessary; but we must not miss heaven!

Some of us are nearer the city than we think. If we only knew how near, with what earnest hearts, with what intense and faithful courage, we would toil in the service of our God. It is not far off to any of us, and not one of us but has some dear souls there who are watching and waiting, and who will give us welcome at our home-coming when we

strike camp for the last time and make our
victorious entry into the city of God!

"Foursquare it lies, with walls of gleaming pearl,
And gates that are not shut at all by day;
There evermore their wings the storm-winds furl,
And night falls not upon the shining way
Up which, by twos and threes, and in great throngs,
The happy people tread, whose mortal road
Led straight to that fair home of endless songs,
The city, beautiful and vast, of God.

"Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, the joy,
The light, the bloom of that sweet dwelling-place;
Where praise is aye the rapturous employ
Of those who there behold God's loving face.
Here, fretted by so many a tedious care,
And bowed by burdens on the weary road,
We can not dream of all the glory there,
In that bright city, beautiful, of God.

"There some have waited for our coming long,
Blown thither by the mystic tide of death;
They catch some fragments of our broken song,
The while the eternal years are as a breath.
There we shall go one gladsome day of days,
And drop forever every cumbering load,
And we shall see undimmed by earth's low haze,
The city, beautiful and vast, of God.

"In that great city we shall see the King,
And tell him how he took us by the hand,
And let us, in our weakness, drag and cling
As children when they do not understand,
Yet with the mother walk as night comes on,
And wish that home was on some shorter road.
Oh, with what pleasure we shall look upon
Our Savior, in the city of our God!"

THE END

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